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Lectures to my students
C. H. Thompson.
Second Series.



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SECOND SERIES

OF

Lectures to my Students:

BEING

ADDRESSES DELIVERED TO THE STUDENTS

OF

The Pastors' College,

METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE.

BY

C. H. SPURGEON.

President.

London:

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INTRODUCTION.

THE former series of my lectures met with a welcome which was by no means anticipated by their author. Everyone has received the book kindly, and some have grown enthusiastic over it. To the gentlemen of the press I am deeply indebted for their cordial reviews, to the general public for largely purchasing, but specially to the many individuals who in private letters have spoken of the work in approving words, which I am not ungrateful enough to forget, nor vain enough to repeat. A man may be allowed to feel glad when he is thanked for having been of service to his fellow men, and those men the ministers of the Lord. It is comforting to know that you have aimed at usefulness, pleasant to believe that you have succeeded, and most of all encouraging to have been assured of it by the persons benefited. With no little fear and trembling the former lectures were submitted to the public eye, but the result is now looked back upon with unusual content. As in duty bound and by gratitude prompted, thanksgivings to God are hereby very earnestly recorded, and indebtedness is also expressed to kindly hearts who have given my addresses so hearty a reception.

One result of the unanimous generosity of my critics has been this second series of lectures: whether this will prove to be a fresh trial for patience, or a further source of satisfaction to my readers, time alone will show. I hope the lectures are not worse than their predecessors. In some respects they ought to be better, for I have had three years' more experience; but there is one valid reason why the latter should hardly be expected to be equal to the former, and it is this—the subjects are not numerous, and the first choice naturally takes off the cream, so that the next gathering must consist of minor topics. I hope, however, that the quality has not very seriously fallen off, and that the clarity of my readers will not fail. At any rate, I do not offer that which has cost me nothing, for I have done my best and taken abundant pains. Therefore with clear conscience I place my work at the service of my brethren, especially hoping to have a careful reading from young preachers, whose profiting has been my principal aim. I have made my addresses entirely for students and beginners in preaching, and I beg that they may always be regarded from that point of view, for many remarks which are proper enough to be made to raw recruits it would be gross impertinence to place before masters in Israel. The intent and object will be borne in mind by every candid reader.

I seize the present opportunity to call attention to the second of my three books for students, for this is properly *the third*. I allude to the volume entitled, "*Commenting and Commentaries*." It embodies the experience and information of a lifetime, but being very much occupied with a Catalogue of Commentaries it cannot commend itself to popular tastes, and must be confined in its circulation to those who wish for information upon expository works. To my own surprise it is in the tenth thousand, but numbers of readers to whom it might be valuable have not yet seen it. As almost all the reviewers speak of it with much praise, I think it will be worth any young man's while to buy it before he gets far on in the formation of a library. It is on my heart, if life is spared, to issue six half-crown books for preachers: the fourth, which is much of it prepared, will be occupied with "*The Art of Illustration*," and I am anxious in no one instance to waste time and labour upon books which will not be read. Hence my reason for mentioning the Commenting book in this place. Life is short, and time is precious to a busy man. Whatever we do we wish to make the most of.

One more apology and note. The lectures upon "*Posture, Gesture, Action, etc.*," will probably be judged to make too much of a secondary matter. I wish I could think so myself. My own observation led me to think them needful, for it has scores of times occurred to me to lament that speakers should neglect those minor points until they spoil themselves thereby. It matters little how a man moves his body and hands so long as he does not call attention to himself by becoming ungainly and grotesque. That many do this is a fact which few will deny, and my motive is not to make mirth at good men's expense, but to prevent its being done by their hearers. It is sad to see the Lord's message marred by being ill told, or to have attention taken off from it by the oddities of the messenger's manner. Could those who consider me to be trifling only see the results of bad action, as they are seen by those who wish that they did not see them, they would discover that a very serious purpose lies beneath the somewhat sarcastic humour which I have employed; and if they also believed, as I do, that such evils cannot be cured except by exposing them to ridicule, they would acquit me of trifling, even if they did not approve of my mode of dealing with the evil.

Hoping that some benefit may accrue to the rising race of preachers, and through them to the church of God, this book is offered to the Lord's service, in the hope that he will use it for his own glory.



The Pastors' College.

THE lectures of which this volume is composed were delivered at the Pastors' College, in the rear of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, and, therefore, we take the liberty to notice that Institution in these pages. To make the College known, and to win for it willing friends, is confessedly one object of our publications upon the ministry, which may, indeed, be viewed as merely the giving forth to a wider area the instruction carried on within the College walls.

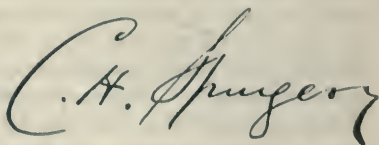
The Institution is intended to aid useful preachers in obtaining a better education. It takes no man to make him a minister, but requires that its pupils should, as a rule, have exercised their gifts for at least two years, and have won souls to Jesus. These we receive, however poor or backward they may be, and our endeavours are all directed to the one aim that they should be instructed in the things of God, furnished for their work, and practised in the gift of utterance. Much prayer is made by the Church in the Tabernacle that this end may be accomplished, nor has the prayer been in vain, for some 365 men who were trained in this manner are now declaring the gospel of Jesus. Besides the students for the regular ministry, several hundreds of street preachers, city missionaries, teachers, and workers of all kinds have passed through our Evening Classes, and more than 200 men are now with us, pursuing their callings by day and studying in the evening. We

ask for much prayer from all our brethren, that the supply of the Spirit may sanctify the teaching, and anoint every worker for the service of the Lord.

As it would be quite unwarrantable for us to interfere with the arrangements of other bodies of Christians, who have their own methods of training their ministers, and as it is obvious that we could not find spheres for men in denominations with which we have no ecclesiastical connection, we confine our College to Baptists; and, in order not to be harassed with endless controversies, we invite those only who hold those views of divine truth which are popularly known as *Calvinistic*,—not that we care for names and phrases; but, as we wish to be understood, we use a term which conveys our meaning as nearly as any descriptive word can do. Believing the grand doctrines of grace to be the natural accompaniments of the fundamental evangelical truth of redemption by the blood of Jesus, we hold and teach them, not only in our ministry to the masses, but in the more select instruction of the class room. Latitudinarianism with its infidelity, and unsectarianism with its intolerance, are neither of them friends of ours: we delight in the man who believes, and therefore speaks. Our Lord has given us no permission to be liberal with what is none of ours. We are to give an account of every truth with which we are put in trust.

Our means for conducting this work are with the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth. We have no list of subscribers or roll of endowments. Our trust is in him whom we desire to serve. He has supported the work for many years, by moving his stewards to send us help, and we are sure that he will continue to do so as long as he desires us to pursue this labour of love. We need at least £120 every week of the year, for we have 113 men to board, lodge, and educate, preaching stations to hire, and new churches to help. Since our service is gratuitous in every sense, we the more freely appeal to those who agree with us in believing that to aid an earnest young minister to equip himself for his life-work is a worthy effort. No money yields so large a return, no work is so important, just now none is so absolutely needful.

NIGHTINGALE LANE,
CLAPHAM, SURREY.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "C. H. Spurgeon". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent initial "C".

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LECTURE I.

The Holy Spirit in connection with our Ministry.

I HAVE selected a topic upon which it would be difficult to say anything which has not been often said before ; but as the theme is of the highest importance it is good to dwell upon it frequently, and even if we bring forth only old things and nothing more, it may be wise to put you in remembrance of them. Our subject is "THE HOLY SPIRIT IN CONNECTION WITH OUR MINISTRY," or—the work of the Holy Ghost in relation to ourselves as ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

"I believe in the Holy Ghost." Having pronounced that sentence as a matter of creed, I hope we can also repeat it as a devout soliloquy forced to our lips by personal experience. To us the presence and work of the Holy Spirit are the ground of our confidence as to the wisdom and hopefulness of our life work. If we had not believed in the Holy Ghost we should have laid down our ministry long ere this, for "who is sufficient for these things?" Our hope of success, and our strength for continuing the service, lie in our belief that the Spirit of the Lord resteth upon us.

I will for the time being take it for granted that we are all of us conscious of the existence of the Holy Spirit. We have said we *believe* in him ; but in very deed we have advanced beyond faith in this matter, and have come into the region of consciousness. Time was when most of us believed in the existence of our present friends, for we had heard of them by the hearing of the ear, but we have now seen each other, and returned the fraternal grip, and felt the influence of happy companionship, and therefore we do not now so much believe as know. Even so we have *felt* the Spirit of God operating upon our hearts, we have known and perceived the power which he wields over human spirits, and we know him by frequent, conscious, personal contact. By the sensitiveness of our spirit we are as much made conscious of the presence of the Spirit of God as we are made cognizant of the

existence of the souls of our fellow-men by their action upon our souls, or as we are certified of the existence of matter by its action upon our senses. We have been raised from the dull sphere of mere mind and matter into the heavenly radiance of the spirit-world; and now, as spiritual men, we discern spiritual things, we feel the forces which are paramount in the spirit-realm, and we know that there is a Holy Ghost, for we feel him operating upon our spirits. If it were not so, we should certainly have no right to be in the ministry of Christ's church. Should we even dare to remain in her membership? But, my brethren, we have been spiritually quickened. We are distinctly conscious of a new life, with all that comes out of it: we are new creatures in Christ Jesus, and dwell in a new world. We have been illuminated, and made to behold the things which eye hath not seen; we have been guided into truth such as flesh and blood could never have revealed. We have been comforted of the Spirit: full often have we been lifted up from the deeps of sorrow to the heights of joy by the sacred Paraclete. We have also, in a measure, been sanctified by him; and we are conscious that the operation of sanctification is going on in us in different forms and ways. Therefore, because of all these personal experiences, we know that there is a Holy Ghost, as surely as we know that we ourselves exist.

I am tempted to linger here, for the point is worthy of longer notice. Unbelievers ask for phenomena. The old business doctrine of Gradgrind has entered into religion, and the sceptic cries, "What I want is facts." *These are our facts*: let us not forget to use them. A sceptic challenges me with the remark, "I cannot pin my faith to a book or a history; I want to see present facts." My reply is, "You cannot see them, because your eyes are blinded; but the facts are there none the less. Those of us who have eyes see marvellous things, though you do not." If he ridicules my assertion, I am not at all astonished. I expected him to do so, and should have been very much surprised if he had not done so; but I demand respect to my own position as a witness to facts, and I turn upon the objector with the enquiry—"What right have you to deny my evidence? If I were a blind man, and were told by you that you possessed a faculty called sight, I should be unreasonable if I railed at you as a conceited enthusiast. All you have a right to say is—that you know nothing about it, but you are not authorized to call us all liars or dupes. You may join with revilers of old and declare that the spiritual man is mad, but that does not disprove his statements." Brethren, to me the

phenomena which are produced by the Spirit of God demonstrate the truth of the Christian religion as clearly as ever the destruction of Pharaoh at the Red Sea, or the fall of manna in the wilderness, or the water leaping from the smitten rock, could have proved to Israel the presence of God in the midst of her tribes.

We will now come to the core of our subject. To us, as ministers, the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential. Without him our office is a mere name. We claim no priesthood over and above that which belongs to every child of God; but we are the successors of those who, in olden times, were moved of God to declare his word, to testify against transgression, and to plead his cause. Unless we have the spirit of the prophets resting upon us, the mantle which we wear is nothing but a rough garment to deceive. We ought to be driven forth with abhorrence from the society of honest men for daring to speak in the name of the Lord if the Spirit of God rests not upon us. We believe ourselves to be spokesmen for Jesus Christ, appointed to continue his witness upon earth; but upon him and his testimony the Spirit of God always rested, and if it does not rest upon us, we are evidently not sent forth into the world as he was. At Pentecost the commencement of the great work of converting the world was with flaming tongues and a rushing mighty wind, symbols of the presence of the Spirit; if, therefore, we think to succeed without the Spirit, we are not after the Pentecostal order. If we have not the Spirit which Jesus promised, we cannot perform the commission which Jesus gave.

I need scarcely warn any brother here against falling into the delusion that we may have the Spirit so as to become inspired. Yet the members of a certain litigious modern sect need to be warned against this folly. They hold that their meetings are under "the presidency of the Holy Spirit:" concerning which notion I can only say that I have been unable to discover in holy Scripture either the term or the idea. I do find in the New Testament a body of Corinthians eminently gifted, fond of speaking, and given to party strifes—true representatives of those to whom I allude, but as Paul said of them, "I thank God I baptized *none of you*," so also do I thank the Lord that few of that school have ever been found in our midst. It would seem that their assemblies possess a peculiar gift of inspiration, not quite perhaps amounting to infallibility, but nearly approximating thereto. If you have mingled in their gatherings, I greatly question whether you have been more edified by the prelections

produced under celestial presidency, than you have been by those of ordinary preachers of the Word, who only consider themselves to be under the influence of the Holy Spirit, as one spirit is under the influence of another spirit, or one mind under the influence of another mind. We are not the passive communicators of infallibility, but the honest teachers of such things as we have learned, so far as we have been able to grasp them. As our minds are active, and have a personal existence while the mind of the Spirit is acting upon them, *our* infirmities are apparent as well as *his* wisdom; and while we reveal what he has made us to know, we are greatly abased by the fear that our own ignorance and error are in a measure manifested at the same time, because we have not been more perfectly subject to the divine power. I do not suspect that you will go astray in the direction I have hinted at: certainly the results of previous experiments are not likely to tempt wise men to that folly.

This is our first question. *Wherein may we look for the aid of the Holy Spirit?* When we have spoken on this point, we will, very solemnly, consider a second—*How may we lose that assistance?* Let us pray that, by God's blessing, this consideration may help us to retain it.

Wherein may we look for the aid of the Holy Spirit? I should reply,—in seven or eight ways.

1. First, *he is the Spirit of knowledge*,—"He shall guide you into all truth." In this character we need his teaching.

We have urgent need to study, for the teacher of others must himself be instructed. Habitually to come into the pulpit unprepared is unpardonable presumption: nothing can more effectually lower ourselves and our office. After a visitation discourse by the Bishop of Lichfield upon the necessity of earnestly studying the Word, a certain vicar told his lordship that he could not believe his doctrine, "for," said he, "often when I am in the vestry I do not know what I am going to talk about; but I go into the pulpit and preach, and think nothing of it." His lordship replied, "And you are quite right in thinking nothing of it, for your churchwardens have told me that they share your opinion." If we are not instructed, how can we instruct? If we have not thought, how shall we lead others to think? It is in our study-work, in that blessed labour when we are alone with the Book before us, that we need the help of the Holy Spirit. He holds the key of the heavenly treasury, and can enrich us beyond conception; he has the clue of the most labyrinthine doctrine, and can lead us in the

way of truth. He can break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron, and give to us the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places. If you study the original, consult the commentaries, and meditate deeply, yet if you neglect to cry mightily unto the Spirit of God your study will not profit you; but even if you are debarred the use of helps (which I trust you will not be), if you wait upon the Holy Ghost in simple dependence upon his teaching, you will lay hold of very much of the divine meaning.

The Spirit of God is peculiarly precious to us, because he especially instructs us as to the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ; and that is the main point of our preaching. He takes of the things of *Christ*, and shows them unto us. If he had taken of the things of doctrine or precept, we should have been glad of such gracious assistance; but since he especially delights in the things of Christ, and focusses his sacred light upon the cross, we rejoice to see the centre of our testimony so divinely illuminated, and we are sure that the light will be diffused over all the rest of our ministry. Let us wait upon the Spirit of God with this cry—"O Holy Spirit, reveal to us the Son of God, and thus show us the Father."

As the Spirit of knowledge, he not only instructs us as to the gospel, but he leads us to see the Lord in all other matters. We are not to shut our eyes to God in nature, or to God in general history, or to God in the daily occurrences of providence, or to God in our own experience; and the blessed Spirit is the interpreter to us of the mind of God in all these. If we cry, "Teach me what thou wouldst have me to do; or, show me wherefore thou contendest with me; or, tell me what is thy mind in this precious providence of mercy, or in that other dispensation of mingled judgment and grace,"—we shall in each case be well instructed; for the Spirit is the seven-branched candlestick of the sanctuary, and by his light all things are rightly seen. As Goodwin well observes, "There must be light to accompany the truth if we are to know it. The experience of all gracious men proves this. What is the reason that you shall see some things in a chapter at one time, and not at another; some grace in your hearts at one time, and not at another; have a sight of spiritual things at one time, and not at another? The eye is the same, but it is the Holy Ghost that openeth and shutteth this dark lantern, as I may so call it; as he openeth it wider, or contracts it, or shutteth it narrower, so do we see more or less: and sometimes he shutteth it

wholly, and then the soul is in darkness, though it have never so good an eye."

Beloved brethren, wait upon him for this light, or you will abide in darkness and become blind leaders of the blind.

2. In the second place, the Spirit is called *the Spirit of wisdom*, and we greatly need him in that capacity; for knowledge may be dangerous if unaccompanied with wisdom, which is the art of rightly using what we know. Rightly to divide the Word of God is as important as fully to understand it, for some who have evidently understood a part of the gospel have given undue prominence to that one portion of it, and have therefore exhibited a distorted Christianity, to the injury of those who have received it, since they in their turn have exhibited a distorted character in consequence thereof. A man's nose is a prominent feature in his face, but it is possible to make it so large that eyes and mouth, and everything else are thrown into insignificance, and the drawing is a caricature and not a portrait: so certain important doctrines of the gospel can be so proclaimed in excess as to throw the rest of truth into the shade, and the preaching is no longer the gospel in its natural beauty, but a caricature of the truth, of which caricature, however, let me say, some people seem to be mightily fond. The Spirit of God will teach you the use of the sacrificial knife to divide the offerings; and he will show you how to use the balances of the sanctuary so as to weigh out and mix the precious spices in their proper quantities. Every experienced preacher feels this to be of the utmost moment, and it is well if he is able to resist all temptation to neglect it. Alas, some of our hearers do not desire to hear the whole counsel of God. They have their favourite doctrines, and would have us silent on all besides. Many are like the Scotchwoman, who, after hearing a sermon, said, "It was very well if it hadna been for the trash of duties at the *hinner* end." There are brethren of that kind; they enjoy the comforting part—the promises and the doctrines, but practical holiness must scarcely be touched upon. Faithfulness requires us to give them a four-square gospel, from which nothing is omitted, and in which nothing is exaggerated, and for this much wisdom is requisite. I gravely question whether any of us have so much of this wisdom as we need. We are probably afflicted by some inexcusable partialities and unjustifiable leanings; let us search them out and have done with them. We may be conscious of having passed by certain texts, not because we do not understand them (which might be justifiable), but because we do understand them, and hardly like to say what

they have taught us, or because there may be some imperfection in ourselves, or some prejudice among our hearers which those texts would reveal too clearly for our comfort. Such sinful silence must be ended forthwith. To be wise stewards and bring forth the right portions of meat for our Master's household we need thy teaching, O Spirit of the Lord!

Nor is this all, for even if we know how rightly to divide the Word of God, we want wisdom in the selection of the particular part of truth which is most applicable to the season and to the people assembled; and equal discretion in the tone and manner in which the doctrine shall be presented. I believe that many brethren who preach human responsibility deliver themselves in so legal a manner as to disgust all those who love the doctrines of grace. On the other hand, I fear that many have preached the sovereignty of God in such a way as to drive all persons who believe in man's free agency entirely away from the Calvinistic side. We should not hide truth for a moment, but we should have wisdom so to preach it that there shall be no needless jarring or offending, but a gradual enlightenment of those who cannot see it at all, and a leading of weaker brethren into the full circle of gospel doctrine.

Brethren, we also need wisdom in the way of putting things to different people. You can cast a man down with the very truth which was intended to build him up. You can sicken a man with the honey with which you meant to sweeten his mouth. The great mercy of God has been preached unguardedly, and has led hundreds into licentiousness; and, on the other hand, the terrors of the Lord have been occasionally fulminated with such violence that they have driven men into despair, and so into a settled defiance of the Most High. Wisdom is profitable to direct, and he who hath it brings forth each truth in its season, dressed in its most appropriate garments. Who can give us this wisdom but the blessed Spirit? O, my brethren, see to it, that in lowliest reverence you wait for his direction.

3. Thirdly, we need the Spirit in another manner, namely, as the live coal from off the altar, touching our lips, so that when we have knowledge and wisdom to select the fitting portion of truth, we may enjoy *freedom of utterance* when we come to deliver it. "Lo, this hath touched thy lips." Oh, how gloriously a man speaks when his lips are blistered with the live coal from the altar—feeling the burning power of the truth, not only in his inmost soul, but on the very lip with which he is speaking! Mark at

such times how his very utterance quivers. Did you not notice in the prayer-meeting just now, in two of the suppliant brethren, how their tones were tremulous, and their bodily frames were quivering, because not only were their hearts touched, as I hope all our hearts were, but their lips were touched, and their speech was thereby affected. Brethren, we need the Spirit of God to open our mouths that we may show forth the praises of the Lord, or else we shall not speak with power.

We need the divine influence to keep us back from saying many things which, if they actually left our tongue, would mar our message. Those of us who are endowed with the dangerous gift of humour have need, sometimes, to stop and take the word out of our mouth and look at it, and see whether it is quite to edification; and those whose previous lives have borne them among the coarse and the rough had need watch with lynx eyes against indelicacy. Brethren, far be it from us to utter a syllable which would suggest an impure thought, or raise a questionable memory. We need the Spirit of God to put bit and bridle upon us to keep us from saying that which would take the minds of our hearers away from Christ and eternal realities, and set them thinking upon the grovelling things of earth.

Brethren, we require the Holy Spirit also to incite us in our utterance. I doubt not you are all conscious of different states of mind in preaching. Some of those states arise from your body being in different conditions. A bad cold will not only spoil the clearness of the voice, but freeze the flow of the thoughts. For my own part if I cannot speak clearly I am unable to think clearly, and the matter becomes hoarse as well as the voice. The stomach, also, and all the other organs of the body, affect the mind; but it is not to these things that I allude. Are you not conscious of changes altogether independent of the body? When you are in robust health do you not find yourselves one day as heavy as Pharaoh's chariots with the wheels taken off, and at another time as much at liberty as "a hind let loose"? To-day your branch glitters with the dew, yesterday it was parched with drought. Who knoweth not that the Spirit of God is in all this? The divine Spirit will sometimes work upon us so as to bear us completely out of ourselves. From the beginning of the sermon to the end we might at such times say, "Whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell: God knoweth." Everything has been forgotten but the one all-engrossing subject in hand. If I were forbidden to enter heaven, but were permitted to select my

state for all eternity, I should choose to be as I sometimes feel in preaching the gospel. Heaven is foreshadowed in such a state: the mind shut out from all disturbing influences, adoring the majestic and consciously present God, every faculty aroused and joyously excited to its utmost capability, all the thoughts and powers of the soul joyously occupied in contemplating the glory of the Lord, and extolling to listening crowds the Beloved of our soul; and all the while the purest conceivable benevolence towards one's fellow creatures urging the heart to plead with them on God's behalf—what state of mind can rival this? Alas, we have reached this ideal, but we cannot always maintain it, for we know also what it is to preach in chains, or beat the air. We may not attribute holy and happy changes in our ministry to anything less than the action of the Holy Spirit upon our souls. I am sure the Spirit does so work. Often and often, when I have had doubts suggested by the infidel, I have been able to fling them to the winds with utter scorn, because I am distinctly conscious of a power working upon me when I am speaking in the name of the Lord, infinitely transcending any personal power of fluency, and far surpassing any energy derived from excitement such as I have felt when delivering a secular lecture or making a speech—so utterly distinct from such power that I am quite certain it is not of the same order or class as the enthusiasm of the politician or the glow of the orator. May we full often feel the divine energy, and speak with power.

4. But then, fourthly, the Spirit of God acts also as *an anointing oil*, and this relates to *the entire delivery*—not to the utterance merely from the mouth, but to the whole delivery of the discourse. He can make you feel your subject till it thrills you, and you become depressed by it so as to be crushed into the earth, or elevated by it so as to be borne upon its eagle wings; making you feel, besides your subject, your object, till you yearn for the conversion of men, and for the uplifting of Christians to something nobler than they have known as yet. At the same time, another feeling is with you, namely, an intense desire that God may be glorified through the truth which you are delivering. You are conscious of a deep sympathy with the people to whom you are speaking, making you mourn over some of them because they know so little, and over others because they have known much, but have rejected it. You look into some faces, and your heart silently says, "The dew is dropping there;" and, turning to others, you sorrowfully perceive that they are as Gilboa's dewless

mountain. All this will be going on during the discourse. We cannot tell how many thoughts can traverse the mind at once. I once counted eight sets of thoughts which were going on in my brain simultaneously, or at least within the space of the same second. I was preaching the gospel with all my might, but could not help feeling for a lady who was evidently about to faint, and also looking out for our brother who opens the windows that he might give us more air. I was thinking of that illustration which I had omitted under the first head, casting the form of the second division, wondering if A felt my rebuke, and praying that B might get comfort from the consoling observation, and at the same time praising God for my own personal enjoyment of the truth I was proclaiming. Some interpreters consider the cherubim with their four faces to be emblems of ministers, and assuredly I see no difficulty in the quadruple form, for the sacred Spirit can multiply our mental states, and make us many times the men we are by nature. How much he can make of us, and how grandly he can elevate us, I will not dare to surmise: certainly, he can do exceeding abundantly above what we ask or even think.

Especially is it the Holy Spirit's work to maintain in us a devotional frame of mind whilst we are discoursing. This is a condition to be greatly coveted—to continue praying while you are occupied with preaching; to do the Lord's commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word; to keep the eye on the throne, and the wing in perpetual motion. I hope we know what this means; I am sure we know, or may soon experience, its opposite, namely, the evil of preaching in an undevotional spirit. What can be worse than to speak under the influence of a proud or angry spirit? What more weakening than to preach in an unbelieving spirit? But, oh, to burn in our secret heart while we blaze before the eyes of others! This is the work of the Spirit of God. Work it in us, O adorable Comforter!

In our pulpits we need the spirit of dependence to be mixed with that of devotion, so that all along, from the first word to the last syllable, we may be looking up to the strong for strength. It is well to feel that though you have continued up to the present point, yet if the Holy Spirit were to leave you, you would play the fool ere the sermon closed. Looking to the hills whence cometh your help all the sermon through, with absolute dependence upon God, you will preach in a brave, confident spirit all the while. Perhaps I was wrong to say "brave," for it is not a brave thing to trust God: to true believers it is a simple matter of sweet necessity—

how can they help trusting him? Wherefore should they doubt their ever faithful Friend? I told my people the other morning, when preaching from the text, "My grace is sufficient for thee," that for the first time in my life I experienced what Abraham felt when he fell upon his face and laughed. I was riding home, very weary with a long week's work, when there came to my mind this text—"My grace is sufficient for thee:" but it came with the emphasis laid upon two words: "*My* grace is sufficient for *thee*." My soul said, "Doubtless it is. Surely the grace of the infinite God is more than sufficient for such a mere insect as I am," and I laughed, and laughed again, to think how far the supply exceeded all my needs. It seemed to me as though I were a little fish in the sea, and in my thirst I said, "Alas, I shall drink up the ocean." Then the Father of the waters lifted up his head sublime, and smilingly replied, "Little fish, the boundless main is sufficient for thee." The thought made unbelief appear supremely ridiculous, as indeed it is. Oh, brethren, we ought to preach feeling that God means to bless the word, for we have his promise for it; and when we have done preaching we should look out for the people who have received a blessing. Do you ever say, "I am overwhelmed with astonishment to find that the Lord has converted souls through my poor ministry"? Mock humility! Your ministry is poor enough. Everybody knows that, and you ought to know it most of all: but, at the same time, is it any wonder that God, who said "My word shall not return unto me void," has kept his promise? Is the meat to lose its nourishment because the dish is a poor platter? Is divine grace to be overcome by our infirmity? No, but we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.

We need the Spirit of God, then, all through the sermon to keep our hearts and minds in a proper condition, for if we have not the right spirit we shall lose the tone which persuades and prevails, and our people will discover that Samson's strength has departed from him. Some speak scoldingly, and so betray their bad temper; others preach themselves, and so reveal their pride. Some discourse as though it were a condescension on their part to occupy the pulpit, while others preach as though they apologised for their existence. To avoid errors of manners and tone, we must be led of the Holy Spirit, who alone teacheth us to profit.

5. Fifthly, we depend entirely upon the Spirit of God *to produce actual effect from the gospel*, and at this effect we must always aim.

We do not stand up in our pulpits to display our skill in spiritual sword play, but we come to actual fighting: our object is to drive the sword of the Spirit through men's hearts. If preaching can ever in any sense be viewed as a public exhibition, it should be like the exhibition of a ploughing match, which consists in actual ploughing. The competition does not lie in the appearance of the ploughs, but in the work done; so let ministers be judged by the way in which they drive the gospel plough, and cut the furrow from end to end of the field. Always aim at effect. "Oh," says one, "I thought you would have said, 'Never do that.'" I do also say, never aim at effect, in the unhappy sense of that expression. Never aim at effect after the manner of the climax makers, poetry quoters, handkerchief manipulators, and bombast blowers. Far better for a man that he had never been born than that he should degrade a pulpit into a show box to exhibit himself in. Aim at the right sort of effect; the inspiring of saints to nobler things, the leading of Christians closer to their Master, the comforting of doubters till they rise out of their terrors, the repentance of sinners, and their exercise of immediate faith in Christ. Without these signs following, what is the use of our sermons? It would be a miserable thing to have to say with a certain archbishop, "I have passed through many places of honour and trust, both in Church and State, more than any of my order in England, for seventy years before; but were I assured that by my preaching I had but converted one soul to God, I should herein take more comfort than in all the honoured offices that have been bestowed upon me." Miracles of grace must be the seals of our ministry; who can bestow them but the Spirit of God? Convert a soul without the Spirit of God! Why, you cannot even make a fly, much less create a new heart and a right spirit. Lead the children of God to a higher life without the Holy Ghost! You are inexpressibly more likely to conduct them into carnal security, if you attempt their elevation by any method of your own. Our ends can never be gained if we miss the co-operation of the Spirit of the Lord. Therefore, with strong crying and tears, wait upon him from day to day.

The lack of distinctly recognizing the power of the Holy Ghost lies at the root of many useless ministries. The forcible words of Robert Hall are as true now as when he poured them forth like molten lava upon a semi-socinian generation. "On the one hand it deserves attention, that the most eminent and successful preachers of the gospel in different communities, a Brainerd, a

Baxter, and a Schwartz, have been the most conspicuous for simple dependence on spiritual aid; and on the other that no success whatever has attended the ministrations of those by whom this doctrine has been either neglected or denied. They have met with such a rebuke of their presumption, in the total failure of their efforts, that none will contend for the reality of Divine interposition, as far as they are concerned; for when has the arm of the Lord been revealed to those pretended teachers of Christianity, who believe there is no such arm? We must leave them to labour in a field respecting which God has commanded the clouds not to rain upon it. As if conscious of this, of late they have turned their efforts into a new channel, and despairing of the conversion of sinners, have confined themselves to the seduction of the faithful; in which, it must be confessed, they have acted in a manner perfectly consistent with their principles; the propagation of heresy requiring, at least, no divine assistance."

6. Next we need the Spirit of God as *the Spirit of supplications*, who maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. A very important part of our lives consists in praying in the Holy Ghost, and that minister who does not think so had better escape from his ministry. Abundant prayer must go with earnest preaching. We cannot be always on the knees of the body, but the soul should never leave the posture of devotion. The habit of prayer is good, but the spirit of prayer is better. Regular retirement is to be maintained, but continued communion with God is to be our aim. As a rule, we ministers ought never to be many minutes without actually lifting up our hearts in prayer. Some of us could honestly say that we are seldom a quarter of an hour without speaking to God, and that not as a duty but as an instinct, a habit of the new nature for which we claim no more credit than a babe does for crying after its mother. How could we do otherwise? Now, if we are to be much in the spirit of prayer, we need secret oil to be poured upon the sacred fire of our heart's devotion; we want to be again and again visited by the Spirit of grace and of supplications.

As to our prayers in public, let it never be truthfully said that they are official, formal, and cold; yet they will be so if the supply of the Spirit be scant. Those who use a liturgy I judge not; but to those who are accustomed to free prayer I say,—you cannot pray acceptably in public year after year without the Spirit of God; dead praying will become offensive to the people long before that time. What then? Whence shall our help come? Certain

weaklings have said, "Let us have a liturgy!" Rather than seek divine aid they will go down to Egypt for help. Rather than be dependent upon the Spirit of God, they will pray by a book! For my part, if I cannot pray, I would rather know it, and groan over my soul's barrenness till the Lord shall again visit me with fruitfulness of devotion. If you are filled with the Spirit, you will be glad to throw off all formal fetters, that you may commit yourself to the sacred current, to be borne along till you find waters to swim in. Sometimes you will enjoy closer fellowship with God in prayer in the pulpit than you have known anywhere else. To me my greatest secrecy in prayer has often been in public; my truest loneliness with God has occurred to me while pleading in the midst of thousands. I have opened my eyes at the close of a prayer and come back to the assembly with a sort of a shock at finding myself upon earth and among men. Such seasons are not at our command, neither can we raise ourselves into such conditions by any preparations or efforts. How blessed they are both to the minister and his people no tongue can tell! How full of power and blessing habitual prayerfulness must also be I cannot here pause to declare, but for it all we must look to the Holy Spirit, and blessed be God we shall not look in vain, for it is especially said of him that he helpeth our infirmities in prayer.

7. Furthermore, it is important that we be under the influence of the Holy Ghost, as he is the *Spirit of holiness*; for a very considerable and essential part of Christian ministry lies in example. Our people take much note of what we say out of the pulpit, and what we do in the social circle and elsewhere. Do you find it easy, my brethren, to be saints?—such saints that others may regard you as examples? We ought to be such husbands that every husband in the parish may safely be such as we are. Is it so? We ought to be the best of fathers. Alas! some ministers, to my knowledge, are far from this, for as to their families, they have kept the vineyards of others, but their own vineyards they have not kept. Their children are neglected, and do not grow up as a godly seed. Is it so with yours? In our converse with our fellow men are we blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke? Such we ought to be. I admire Mr. Whitfield's reasons for always having his linen scrupulously clean. "No, no," he would say, "these are not trifles; a minister must be without spot, even in his garments, if he can." Purity cannot be carried too far in a minister. You have known an unhappy brother bespatter himself, and you have affectionately aided in removing the

spots, but you have felt that it would have been better had the garments been always white. O to keep ourselves unspotted from the world! How can this be in such a scene of temptation, and with such besetting sins unless we are preserved by superior power? If you are to walk in all holiness and purity, as becometh ministers of the gospel, you must be daily baptized into the Spirit of God.

8. Once again, we need the Spirit as a *Spirit of discernment*, for he knows the minds of men as he knows the mind of God, and we need this very much in dealing with difficult characters. There are in this world some persons who might possibly be allowed to preach, but they should never be suffered to become pastors. They have a mental or spiritual disqualification. In the church of San Zeno, at Verona, I saw the statue of that saint in a sitting posture, and the artist has given him knees so short that he has no lap whatever, so that he could not have been a nursing father. I fear there are many others who labour under a similar disability: they cannot bring their minds to enter heartily into the pastoral care. They can dogmatize upon a doctrine, and controvert upon an ordinance, but as to sympathizing with an experience, it is far from them. Cold comfort can such render to afflicted consciences; their advice will be equally valuable with that of the highlander who is reported to have seen an Englishman sinking in a bog on Ben Nevis. "I am sinking!" cried the traveller. "Can you tell me how to get out?" The highlander calmly replied, "I think it is likely you never will," and walked away. We have known ministers of that kind, puzzled, and almost annoyed with sinners struggling in the slough of despond. If you and I, untrained in the shepherd's art, were placed among the ewes and young lambs in the early spring, what should we do with them? In some such perplexity are those found who have never been taught of the Holy Spirit how to care for the souls of men. May his instructions save us from such wretched incompetence.

Moreover, brethren, whatever our tenderness of heart, or loving anxiety, we shall not know how to deal with the vast variety of cases unless the Spirit of God shall direct us, for no two individuals are alike; and even the same case will require different treatment at different times. At one period it may be best to console, at another to rebuke; and the person with whom you sympathized even to tears to-day may need that you confront him with a frown to-morrow, for trifling with the consolation which

you presented. Those who bind up the broken-hearted, and set free the captives, must have the Spirit of the Lord upon them.

In the oversight and guidance of a church the Spirit's aid is needed. At bottom the chief reason for secession from our denomination has been the difficulty arising out of our church government. It is said to "tend to the unrest of the ministry." Doubtless, it is very trying to those who crave for the dignity of officialism, and must need be Sir Oracles, before whom not a dog must bark. Those who are no more capable of ruling than mere babes are the very persons who have the greatest thirst for authority, and, finding little of it awarded to them in these parts, they seek other regions. If you cannot rule yourself, if you are not manly and independent, if you are not superior in moral weight, if you have not more gift and more grace than your ordinary hearers, you may put on a gown and claim to be the ruling person in the church; but it will not be in a church of the Baptist or New Testament order. For my part I should loathe to be the pastor of a people who have nothing to say, or who, if they do say anything, might as well be quiet, for the pastor is Lord Paramount, and they are mere laymen and nobodies. I would sooner be the leader of six free men, whose enthusiastic love is my only power over them, than play the dictator to a score of enslaved nations. What position is nobler than that of a spiritual father who claims no authority and yet is universally esteemed, whose word is given only as tender advice, but is allowed to operate with the force of law? Consulting the wishes of others he finds that they first desire to know what he would recommend, and deferring always to the desires of others, he finds that they are glad to defer to him. Lovingly firm and graciously gentle, he is the chief of all because he is the servant of all. Does not this need wisdom from above? What can require it more? David when established on the throne said, "It is he that subdueth my people under me," and so may every happy pastor say when he sees so many brethren of differing temperaments all happily willing to be under discipline, and to accept his leadership in the work of the Lord. If the Lord were not among us how soon there would be confusion. Ministers, deacons, and elders may all be wise, but if the sacred Dove departs, and the spirit of strife enters, it is all over with us. Brethren, our system will not work without the Spirit of God, and I am glad it will not, for its stoppages and breakages call our attention to the fact of his absence. Our system was never intended to promote the glory of priests and pastors, but it is calculated to

educate manly Christians, who will not take their faith at second-hand. What am I, and what are you, that we should be lords over God's heritage? Dare any of us say with the French king, "*L'état, c'est moi*"—"the state is myself,"—I am the most important person in the church? If so, the Holy Spirit is not likely to use such unsuitable instruments; but if we know our places and desire to keep them with all humility, he will help us, and the churches will flourish beneath our care.

I have given you a lengthened catalogue of matters wherein the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary to us, and yet the list is very far from complete. I have intentionally left it imperfect, because if I attempted its completion all our time would have expired before we were able to answer the question, **HOW MAY WE LOSE THIS NEEDFUL ASSISTANCE?** Let none of us ever try the experiment, but it is certain that ministers may lose the aid of the Holy Ghost. Each man here may lose it. You shall not perish as believers, for everlasting life is in you; but you may perish as ministers, and be no more heard of as witnesses for the Lord. Should this happen it will not be without a cause. The Spirit claims a sovereignty like that of the wind which bloweth where it listeth; but let us never dream that sovereignty and capriciousness are the same thing. The blessed Spirit acts as he wills, but he always acts justly, wisely, and with motive and reason. At times he gives or withholds his blessing, for reasons connected with ourselves. Mark the course of a river like the Thames; how it winds and twists according to its own sweet will: yet there is a reason for every bend and curve: the geologist studying the soil and marking the conformation of the rock, sees a reason why the river's bed diverges to the right or to the left: and so, though the Spirit of God blesses one preacher more than another, and the reason cannot be such that any man could congratulate himself upon his own goodness, yet there are certain things about Christian ministers which God blesses, and certain other things which hinder success. The Spirit of God falls like the dew, in mystery and power, but it is in the spiritual world as in the natural: certain substances are wet with the celestial moisture while others are always dry. Is there not a cause? The wind blows where it lists; but if we desire to feel a stiff breeze we must go out to sea, or climb the hills. The Spirit of God has his favoured places for displaying his might. He is typified by a dove, and the dove has its chosen haunts: to the rivers of waters, to the peaceful and quiet places, the dove resorts;

we meet it not upon the battle-field, neither does it alight on carrion. There are things congruous to the Spirit, and things contrary to his mind. The Spirit of God is compared to light, and light can shine where it wills, but some bodies are opaque, while others are transparent; and so there are men through whom God the Holy Ghost can shine, and there are others through whom his brightness never appears. Thus, then, it can be shown that the Holy Ghost, though he be the "free Spirit" of God, is by no means capricious in his operations.

But, dear brethren, the Spirit of God may be grieved and vexed, and even resisted: to deny this is to oppose the constant testimony of Scripture. Worst of all, we may do despite to him, and so insult him that he will speak no more by us, but leave us as he left king Saul of old. Alas, that there should be men in the Christian ministry to whom this has happened; but I am afraid there are.

Brethren, what are those evils which will grieve the Spirit? I answer, anything that would have disqualified you as an ordinary Christian for communion with God also disqualifies you for feeling the extraordinary power of the Holy Spirit as a minister: but, apart from that, there are special hindrances.

Among the first we must mention a want of sensitiveness, or that unfeeling condition which arises from disobeying the Spirit's influences. We should be delicately sensitive to his faintest movement, and then we may expect his abiding presence, but if we are as the horse and as the mule, which have no understanding, we shall feel the whip, but we shall not enjoy the tender influences of the Comforter.

Another grieving fault is a want of truthfulness. When a great musician takes a guitar, or touches a harp, and finds that the notes are false, he stays his hand. Some men's souls are not honest; they are sophistical and double-minded. Christ's Spirit will not be an accomplice with men in the wretched business of shuffling and deceiving. Does it really come to this—that you preach certain doctrines, not because you believe them, but because your congregation expects you to do so? Are you biding your time till you can, without risk, renounce your present creed and tell out what your dastardly mind really holds to be true? Then are you fallen indeed, and are baser than the meanest slaves. God deliver us from treacherous men, and if they enter our ranks, may they speedily be drummed out to the tune of the Rogue's March. If we feel an abhorrence of them, how much more must the Spirit of truth detest them!

You can greatly grieve the Holy Spirit by a general scantiness of grace. The phrase is awkward, but it describes certain persons better than any other which occurs to me. The Scanty-grace family usually have one of the brothers in the ministry. I know the man. He is not dishonest, nor immoral, he is not bad tempered, nor self-indulgent, but there is a something wanting: it would not be easy to prove its absence by any overt offence, but it is wanting in the whole man, and its absence spoils everything. He wants the one thing needful. He is not spiritual, he has no savour of Christ, his heart never burns within him, his soul is not alive, he wants grace. We cannot expect the Spirit of God to bless a ministry which never ought to have been exercised, and certainly a graceless ministry is of that character.

Another evil which drives away the divine Spirit is pride. The way to be very great is to be very little. To be very noteworthy in your own esteem is to be unnoticed of God. If you must needs dwell upon the high places of the earth, you shall find the mountain summits cold and barren: the Lord dwells with the lowly, but he knows the proud afar off.

The Holy Ghost is also vexed by laziness. I cannot imagine the Spirit waiting at the door of a sluggard, and supplying the deficiencies created by indolence. Sloth in the cause of the Redeemer is a vice for which no excuse can be invented. We ourselves feel our flesh creep when we see the dilatory movements of sluggards, and we may be sure that the active Spirit is equally vexed with those who trifle in the work of the Lord.

Neglect of private prayer and many other evils will produce the same unhappy result, but there is no need to enlarge, for your own consciences will tell you, brethren, what it is that grieves the Holy One of Israel.

And now, let me entreat you, listen to this word:—*Do you know what may happen if the Spirit of God be greatly grieved and depart from us?* There are two suppositions. The first is that we never were God's true servants at all, but were only temporarily used by him, as Balaam was, and even the ass on which he rode. Suppose, brethren, that you and I go on comfortably preaching a while, and are neither suspected by ourselves nor others to be destitute of the Spirit of God: our ministry may all come to an end on a sudden, and we may come to an end with it; we may be smitten down in our prime, as were Nadab and Abihu, no more to be seen ministering before the Lord, or removed in riper years, like Hophni and Phineas, no longer to serve in the tabernacle of the congregation.

We have no inspired annalist to record for us the sudden cutting off of promising men, but if we had, it may be we should read with terror—of zeal sustained by strong drink, of public Phariseism associated with secret defilement, of avowed orthodoxy concealing absolute infidelity, or of some other form of strange fire presented upon the altar till the Lord would endure it no more, and cut off the offenders with a sudden stroke. Shall this terrible doom happen to any one of us?

Alas, I have seen some deserted by the Holy Spirit, as Saul was. It is written that the Spirit of God came upon Saul, but he was faithless to the divine influence, and it departed, and an evil spirit occupied its place. See how the deserted preacher moodily plays the cynic, criticises all others, and hurls the javelin of detraction at a better man than himself. Saul was once among the prophets, but he was more at home among the persecutors. The disappointed preacher worries the true evangelist, resorts to the witchcraft of philosophy, and seeks help from dead heresies; but his power is gone, and the Philistines will soon find him among the slain. "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon! ye daughters of Israel weep over Saul! How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle!"

Some, too, deserted by the Spirit of God, have become like the sons of one Sceva, a Jew. These pretenders tried to cast out devils in the name of Jesus, whom Paul preached, but the devils leaped upon them and overcame them; thus while certain preachers have declaimed against sin, the very vices which they denounced have overthrown them. The sons of Sceva have been among us in England: the devils of drunkenness have prevailed over the very man who denounced the bewitching cup, and the demon of unchastity has leaped upon the preacher who applauded purity. If the Holy Ghost be absent, ours is of all positions the most perilous; therefore let us beware.

Alas, some ministers become like Balaam. He was a prophet, was he not? Did he not speak in the name of the Lord? Is he not called "the man whose eyes are opened, which saw the vision of the Almighty?" Yet Balaam fought against Israel, and cunningly devised a scheme by which the chosen people might be overthrown. Ministers of the gospel have become Papists, infidels, and freethinkers, and plotted the destruction of what they once professed to prize. We may be apostles, and yet, like Judas, turn out to be sons of perdition. Woe unto us if this be the case!

Brethren, I will assume that we really are the children of God,

and what then? Why, even then, if the Spirit of God depart from us, we may be taken away on a sudden as the deceived prophet was who failed to obey the command of the Lord in the days of Jeroboam. He was no doubt a man of God, and the death of his body was no evidence of the loss of his soul, but he broke away from what he knew to be the command of God given specially to himself, and his ministry ended there and then, for a lion met him by the way and slew him. May the Holy Spirit preserve us from deceivers, and keep us true to the voice of God.

Worse still, we may reproduce the life of Samson, upon whom the Spirit of God came in the camps of Dan; but in Delilah's lap he lost his strength, and in the dungeon he lost his eyes. He bravely finished his life-work, blind as he was, but who among us wishes to tempt such a fate?

Or—and this last has saddened me beyond all expression, because it is much more likely than any of the rest—we may be left by the Spirit of God, in a painful degree, to mar the close of our life-work as Moses did. Not to lose our souls, nay, not even to lose our crowns in heaven, or even our reputations on earth; but, still, to be under a cloud in our last days through once speaking unadvisedly with our lips. I have lately studied the later days of the great prophet of Horeb, and I have not yet recovered from the deep gloom of spirit which it cast over me. What was the sin of Moses? You need not enquire. It was not gross like the transgression of David, nor startling like the failure of Peter, nor weak and foolish like the grave fault of his brother Aaron; indeed, it seems an infinitesimal offence as weighed in the balances of ordinary judgment. But then, you see, it was the sin of Moses, of a man favoured of God beyond all others, of a leader of the people, of a representative of the divine King. The Lord could have overlooked it in anyone else, but not in Moses: Moses must be chastened by being forbidden to lead the people into the promised land. Truly, he had a glorious view from the top of Pisgah, and everything else which could mitigate the rigour of the sentence, but it was a great disappointment never to enter the land of Israel's inheritance, and that for once speaking unadvisedly. I would not shun my Master's service, but I tremble in his presence. Who can be faultless when even Moses erred? It is a dreadful thing to be beloved of God. "Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly"—he alone can face that sin-consuming flame of love. Brethren,

I beseech you, crave Moses's place, but tremble as you take it. Fear and tremble for all the good that God shall make to pass before you. When you are fullest of the fruits of the Spirit bow lowest before the throne, and serve the Lord with fear. "The Lord our God is a jealous God." Remember that God has come unto us, not to exalt *us*, but to exalt *himself*, and we must see to it that his glory is the one sole object of all that we do. "He must increase, and I must *decrease*." Oh, may God bring us to this, and make us walk very carefully and humbly before him. God will search us and try us, for judgment begins at his own house, and in that house it begins with his ministers. Will any of us be found wanting? Shall the pit of hell draw a portion of its wretched inhabitants from among our band of pastors? Terrible will be the doom of a fallen preacher: his condemnation will astonish common transgressors. "Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming." All they shall speak and say unto thee, "Art thou also become weak as we? Art thou become like unto us?" O for the Spirit of God to make, and keep us alive unto God, faithful to our office, and useful to our generation, and clear of the blood of men's souls. Amen.

LECTURE II.

The Necessity of Ministerial Progress.*

DEAR FELLOW SOLDIERS! We are few, and we have a desperate fight before us, therefore it is needful that every man should be made the most of, and nerved to his highest point of strength. It is desirable that the Lord's ministers should be the picked men of the church, yea, of the entire universe, for such the age demands; therefore, in reference to yourselves and your personal qualifications, I give you the motto, "*Go forward.*" *Go forward* in personal attainments, *forward* in gifts and in grace, *forward* in fitness for the work, and *forward* in conformity to the image of Jesus. The points I shall speak upon begin at the base, and ascend.

1. First, dear brethren, I think it necessary to say to myself and to you that *we must go forward in our mental acquirements.* It will never do for us continually to present ourselves to God at our worst. We are not worth his having at our best; but at any rate let not the offering be maimed and blemished by our idleness. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart" is, perhaps, more easy to comply with, than to love him with all our mind; yet we must give him our mind as well as our affections, and that mind should be well furnished, that we may not offer him an empty casket. Our ministry demands mind. I shall not insist upon "the enlightenment of the age," still it is quite certain that there is a great educational advance among all classes, and that there will yet be much more of it. The time is passed when ungrammatical speech will suffice for a preacher. Even in a country village, where, according to tradition, "nobody knows nothing," the schoolmaster is now abroad, and want of education will hinder usefulness more than it once did; for, when the speaker wishes his audience to remember the gospel, they on the other

* This lecture was delivered to ministers who had been educated at the Pastors' College as well as to students, hence certain differences of expression.

hand will remember his ungrammatical expressions, and will repeat them as themes for jest, when we could have wished they had rehearsed the divine doctrines to one another in solemn earnest. Dear brethren, we must cultivate ourselves to the highest possible point, and we should do this, first, by gathering in knowledge that we may fill the barn, then by acquiring discrimination that we may winnow the heap, and lastly by a firm retentiveness of mind, by which we may lay up the winnowed grain in the storehouse. These three points may not be equally important, but they are all necessary to a complete man.

We must, I say, make great efforts to *acquire* information, especially of a Biblical kind. We must not confine ourselves to one topic of study, or we shall not exercise our whole mental manhood. God made the world for man, and he made man with a mind intended to occupy and use all the world ; he is the tenant, and nature is for a while his house ; why should he shut himself out of any of its rooms ? Why refuse to taste any of the cleansed meats the great Father has put upon the table ? Still, our main business is to study the Scriptures. The smith's main business is to shoe horses ; let him see that he knows how to do it, for should he be able to belt an angel with a girdle of gold he will fail as a smith if he cannot make and fix a horse-shoe. It is a small matter that you should be able to write the most brilliant poetry, as possibly you could, unless you can preach a good and telling sermon, which will have the effect of comforting saints and convincing sinners. Study the Bible, dear brethren, through and through, with all helps that you can possibly obtain : remember that the appliances now within the reach of ordinary Christians are much more extensive than they were in our fathers' days, and therefore you must be greater Biblical scholars if you would keep in front of your hearers. Intermeddle with all knowledge, but above all things meditate day and night in the law of the Lord.

Be well instructed in theology, and do not regard the sneers of those who rail at it because they are ignorant of it. Many preachers are not theologians, and hence the mistakes which they make. It cannot do any hurt to the most lively evangelist to be also a sound theologian, and it may often be the means of saving him from gross blunders. Now-a-days we hear men tear a single sentence of Scripture from its connection, and cry "Eureka ! Eureka !" as if they had found a new truth ; and yet they have not discovered a diamond, but a piece of broken glass. Had they been able to compare spiritual things with spiritual, had they

understood the analogy of the faith, and had they been acquainted with the holy learning of the great Bible students of ages past, they would not have been quite so fast in vaunting their marvellous knowledge. Let us be thoroughly well acquainted with the great doctrines of the Word of God, and let us be mighty in expounding Scripture. I am sure that no preaching will last so long, or build up a church so well, as the expository. To renounce altogether the hortatory discourse for the expository would be running to a preposterous extreme ; but I cannot too earnestly assure you that if your ministries are to be lastingly useful you must be expositors. For this you must understand the Word yourselves, and be able so to comment upon it that the people may be built up by the Word. Be masters of your Bibles, brethren : whatever other works you have not searched, be at home with the writings of the prophets and apostles. "Let the word of God dwell in you richly."

Having given precedence to the inspired writings, neglect no field of knowledge. The presence of Jesus on the earth has sanctified the realms of nature, and what he has cleansed call not you common. All that your Father has made is yours, and you should learn from it. You may read a naturalist's journal, or a traveller's voyage, and find profit in it. Yes, and even an old herbal, or a manual of alchemy may, like Samson's dead lion, yield you honey. There are pearls in oyster shells, and fruits on thorny boughs. The paths of true science, especially natural history and botany, drop fatness. Geology, so far as it is fact, and not fiction, is full of treasures. History—wonderful are the visions which it makes to pass before you—is eminently instructive ; indeed, every portion of God's dominion in nature teems with precious teachings. Follow the trails of knowledge, according as you have the time, the opportunity, and the peculiar faculty ; and do not hesitate to do so because of any apprehension that you will educate yourselves up to too high a point. When grace abounds, learning will not puff you up, or injure your simplicity in the gospel. Serve God with such education as you have, and thank him for blowing through you if you are a ram's horn, but if there be a possibility of your becoming a silver trumpet, choose it rather.

I have said that we must also learn to *discriminate*, and at this particular time that point needs insisting on. Many run after novelties, charmed with every invention : learn to judge between truth and its counterfeits, and you will not be led astray. Others adhere like limpets to old teachings, and yet these may

only be ancient errors : prove all things, and hold fast that which is good. The use of the sieve, and the winnowing fan, is much to be commended. Dear brethren, a man who has asked of the Lord to give him clear eyes by which he shall see the truth and discern its bearings, and who, by reason of the constant exercise of his faculties, has obtained an accurate judgment, is one fit to be a leader of the Lord's host ; but all are not such. It is painful to observe how many embrace anything if it be but earnestly brought before them. They swallow the medicine of every spiritual quack who has enough of brazen assurance to appear to be sincere. Be ye not such children in understanding, but test carefully before you accept. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you the faculty of discerning, so shall you conduct your flocks far from poisonous meadows, and lead them into safe pasturage.

When in due time you have gained the power of acquiring knowledge, and the faculty of discrimination, seek next for ability to *retain* and hold firmly what you have learned. In these times certain men glory in being weathercocks ; they hold fast nothing, they have, in fact, nothing worth the holding. They believed yesterday, but not that which they believe to-day, nor that which they will believe to-morrow ; and he would be a greater prophet than Isaiah who should be able to tell what they will believe when next the moon doth fill her horns, for they are constantly altering, and seem to be born under that said moon, and to partake of her changing moods. These men may be as honest as they claim to be, but of what use are they ? Like good trees oftentimes transplanted, they may be of a noble nature, but they bring forth nothing ; their strength goes out in rooting and re-rooting, they have no sap to spare for fruit. Be sure you have the truth, and then be sure you hold it. Be ready for fresh truth, *if it be truth*, but be very chary how you subscribe to the belief that a better light has been found than that of the sun. Those who hawk new truth about the street, as the boys do a second edition of the evening paper, are usually no better than they should be. The fair maid of truth does not paint her cheeks and tire her head like Jezebel, following every new philosophic fashion ; she is content with her own native beauty, and her aspect is in the main the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. When men change often they generally need to be changed in the most emphatic sense. Our "modern thought" gentry are doing incalculable mischief to the souls of men, and resemble Nero fiddling upon the top of a tower with Rome burning at his feet. Souls are being damned,

and yet these men are spinning theories. Hell gapes wide, and with her open mouth swallows up myriads, and those who should spread the tidings of salvation are "pursuing fresh lines of thought." Highly cultured soul-murderers will find their boasted "culture" to be no excuse in the day of judgment. For God's sake, let us know how men are to be saved, and get to the work: to be for ever deliberating as to the proper mode of making bread while a nation dies of famine is detestable trifling. It is time we knew what to teach, or else renounced our office. "For ever learning and never coming to the truth" is the motto of the worst rather than the best of men. I saw in Rome a statue of a boy extracting a thorn from his foot; I went my way, and returned in a year's time, and there sat the selfsame boy, extracting the intruder still. Is this to be our model? "I shape my creed every week," was the confession of one of these divines to me. Whereunto shall I liken such unsettled ones? Are they not like those birds which frequent the Golden Horn, and are to be seen from Constantinople, of which it is said that they are always on the wing, and never rest? No one ever saw them alight on the water or on the land, they are for ever poised in mid-air. The natives call them "lost souls," seeking rest and finding none. Assuredly, men who have no personal rest in the truth, if they are not unsaved themselves, are, at least, very unlikely to save others. He who has no assured truth to tell must not wonder if his hearers set small store by him. We must know the truth, understand it, and hold it with firm grip, or we cannot hope to lead others to believe it. Brethren, I charge you, seek to know and to discriminate; and then, having discriminated, labour to be rooted and grounded in the truth. Keep in full operation the processes of filling the barn, winnowing the grain, and storing it in granaries, so shall you mentally "Go forward."

2. We need to go forward in *oratorical qualifications*. I am beginning at the bottom, but even this is important, for it is a pity that even the feet of this image should be of clay. Nothing is trifling which can be of any service to our grand design. Only for want of a nail the horse lost his shoe, and so became unfit for the battle; that shoe was only a trifling rim of iron which smote the ground, and yet the neck clothed with thunder was of no avail when the shoe was gone. A man may be irretrievably ruined for spiritual usefulness, not because he fails either in character or spirit, but because he breaks down mentally or oratorically, and, therefore, I have begun with these points, and again remark that

we must improve in utterance. It is not every one of us who can speak as some can do, and even these men cannot speak up to their own ideal. If there be any brother here who thinks he can preach as well as he should, I would advise him to leave off altogether. If he did so he would be acting as wisely as the great painter who broke his palette, and, turning to his wife, said, "My painting days are over, for I have satisfied myself, and therefore I am sure my power is gone." Whatever other perfection may be reachable, I am certain that he who thinks he has gained perfection in oratory mistakes volubility for eloquence, and verbiage for argument. Whatever you may know, you cannot be truly efficient ministers if you are not "apt to teach." You know ministers who have mistaken their calling, and evidently have no gifts for it: make sure that none think the same of you. There are brethren in the ministry whose speech is intolerable; either they rouse you to wrath, or else they send you to sleep. No choral can ever equal some discourses in sleep-giving properties; no human being, unless gifted with infinite patience, could long endure to listen to them, and nature does well to give the victim deliverance through sleep. I heard one say the other day that a certain preacher had no more gifts for the ministry than an oyster, and in my own judgment this was a slander on the oyster, for that worthy bivalve shows great discretion in his openings, and knows when to close. If some men were sentenced to hear their own sermons it would be a righteous judgment upon them, and they would soon cry out with Cain, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." Let us not fall under the same condemnation.

Brethren, we should cultivate a *clear style*. When a man does not make me understand what he means, it is because he does not himself know what he means. An average hearer, who is unable to follow the course of thought of the preacher, ought not to worry himself, but to blame the preacher, whose business it is to make the matter plain. If you look down into a well, if it be empty it will appear to be very deep, but if there be water in it you will see its brightness. I believe that many "deep" preachers are simply so because they are like dry wells with nothing whatever in them, except decaying leaves, a few stones, and perhaps a dead cat or two. If there be living water in your preaching it may be very deep, but the light of truth will give clearness to it. It is not enough to be so plain that you can be understood, you must speak so that you cannot be misunderstood.

We must cultivate a *cogent* as well as a clear style; our speech

must be forceful. Some imagine that this consists in speaking loudly, but I can assure them they are in error. Nonsense does not improve by being bellowed. God does not require us to shout as if we were speaking to ten thousand when we are only addressing three hundred. Let us be forcible by reason of the excellence of our matter, and the energy of spirit which we throw into the delivery of it. In a word, let our speaking be *natural* and living. I hope we have foresworn the tricks of professional orators, the strain for effect, the studied climax, the pre-arranged pause, the theatric strut, the mouthing of words, and I know not what besides, which you may see in certain pompous divines who still survive upon the face of the earth. May such become extinct animals ere long, and may a living, natural, simple way of talking out the gospel be learned by us all; for I am persuaded that such a style is one which God is likely to bless.

Among many other things, we must cultivate *persuasiveness*. Some of our brethren have great influence over men, and yet others with greater gifts are devoid of it; these last do not appear to get near to the people, they cannot grip them and make them feel. There are preachers who in their sermons seem to take their hearers one by one by the button-hole, and drive the truth right into their souls, while others generalise so much, and are so cold withal, that one would think they were speaking of dwellers in some remote planet, whose affairs did not much concern them. Learn the art of pleading with men. You will do this well if you often see the Lord. If I remember rightly, the old classic story tells us that, when a soldier was about to kill Darius, his son, who had been dumb from his childhood, suddenly cried out in surprise, "Know you not that he is the king?" His silent tongue was unloosed by love to his father, and well may ours find earnest speech when the Lord is seen by us crucified for sin. If there be any speech in us, this will rouse it. The knowledge of the terrors of the Lord should also bestir us to persuade men. We cannot do other than plead with them to be reconciled to God. Brethren, mark those who woo sinners to Jesus, find out their secret, and never rest till you obtain the same power. If you find them very simple and homely, yet if you see them really useful, say to yourself, "That is my fashion;" but if on the other hand you listen to a preacher who is much admired, and on inquiry find that no souls are savingly converted, say to yourself, "This is not the thing for me, for I am not seeking to be great, but to be really useful."

Let your oratory, therefore, constantly improve in clearness, cogency, naturalness, and persuasiveness. Try, dear brethren, to get such a style of speaking that you *suit yourselves to your audiences*. Much lies in that. The preacher who should address an educated congregation in the language which he would use in speaking to a company of costermongers would prove himself a fool: and on the other hand, he who goes down amongst miners and colliers with technical theological terms and drawing-room phrases acts like an idiot. The confusion of tongues at Babel was more thorough than we imagine. It did not merely give different languages to great nations, but it made the speech of each class to vary from that of others. A fellow of Billingsgate cannot understand a fellow of Brazenose. Now as the costermonger cannot learn the language of the college, let the college learn the language of the costermonger. "We use the language of the market," said Whitfield, and this was much to his honour; yet when he stood in the drawing-room of the Countess of Huntingdon, and his speech entranced the infidel noblemen whom she brought to hear him, he adopted another style. His language was equally plain in each case, because it was equally familiar to the audience: he did not use the *ipsissima verba*, or his language would have lost its plainness in the one case or the other, and would either have been slang to the nobility, or Greek to the crowd. In our modes of speech we should aim at being "all things to all men." He is the greatest master of oratory who is able to address any class of people in a manner suitable to their condition, and likely to touch their hearts.

Brethren, let none excel us in power of speech: let none surpass us in the mastery of our mother tongue. Beloved fellow-soldiers, our tongues are the swords which God has given us to use for him, even as it is said of our Lord, "Out of his mouth went a two-edged sword." Let these swords be sharp. Cultivate your powers of speech, and be amongst the foremost in the land for utterance. I do not exhort you to this because you are remarkably deficient; far from it, for everybody says to me, "We know the college men by their plain, bold speech." This leads me to believe that you have the gift largely in you, and I beseech you to take pains to perfect it.

3. Brethren, we must be even more earnest to go forward in *moral qualities*. Let the points I shall mention here come home to those who shall require them, but I assure you I have no special persons among you in my mind's eye. We desire to rise to the

highest style of ministry, and if so, even if we obtain the mental and oratorical qualifications, we shall fail, unless we also possess high moral qualities.

There are evils which we must shake off, as Paul shook the viper from his hand, and there are virtues which we must gain at any cost.

Self-indulgence has slain its thousands ; let us tremble lest we perish by the hands of that Delilah. Let us have every passion and habit under due restraint : if we are not masters of ourselves we are not fit to be leaders in the church.

We must put away all notion of self-importance. God will not bless the man who thinks himself great. To glory even in the work of God the Holy Spirit in yourself is to tread dangerously near to self-adulation. "Let another praise thee, and not thine own lips," and be very glad when that other has sense enough to hold his tongue.

We must also have our tempers well under restraint. A vigorous temper is not altogether an evil. Men who are as easy as an old shoe are generally of as little worth. I would not say to you, "Dear brethren, have a temper," but I do say, "If you have it, control it carefully." I thank God when I see a minister have temper enough to be indignant at wrong, and to be firm for the right ; still, temper is an edged tool, and often cuts the man who handles it. "Gentle, easy to be entreated," preferring to bear evil rather than inflict it, this is to be our spirit. If any brother here naturally boils over too soon, let him mind that when he does so he scalds nobody but the devil, and then let him boil away.

We must conquer—some of us especially—our tendency to levity. A great distinction exists between holy cheerfulness, which is a virtue, and that general levity, which is a vice. There is a levity which has not enough heart to laugh, but trifles with everything ; it is flippant, hollow, unreal. A hearty laugh is no more levity than a hearty cry. I speak of that religious veneering which is pretentious, but thin, superficial, and insincere about the weightiest matters. Godliness is no jest, nor is it a mere form. Beware of being actors. Never give earnest men the impression that you do not mean what you say, and are mere professionals. To be burning at the lip and freezing at the soul is a mark of reprobation. God deliver us from being superfine and superficial : may we never be the butterflies of the garden of God.

At the same time, we should avoid everything like the ferocity of bigotry. I know a class of religious people who, I have no

doubt, were born of a woman, but they appear to have been suckled by a wolf. I have done them no dishonour : were not Romulus and Remus, the founders of Rome, so reared? Some warlike men of this order have had sufficient mental power to found dynasties of thought; but human kindness and brotherly love consort better with the kingdom of Christ. We are not to go about the world searching out heresies, like terrier dogs sniffing for rats; nor are we to be so confident of our own infallibility as to erect ecclesiastical stakes at which to roast all who differ from us, not, 'tis true, with fagots of wood, but with those coals of juniper, which consist of strong prejudice and cruel suspicion.

In addition to all this, there are mannerisms, and moods, and ways which I cannot now describe, against which we must struggle, for little faults may often be the source of failure, and to get rid of them may be the secret of success. Count nothing little which even in a small degree hinders your usefulness; cast out from the temple of your soul the seats of them that sell doves as well as the traffickers in sheep and oxen.

And, dear brethren, we must acquire certain moral faculties and habits, as well as put aside their opposites. He will never do much for God who has not integrity of spirit. If we be guided by policy, if there be any mode of action for us but that which is straightforward, we shall make shipwreck before long. Resolve, dear brethren, that you can be poor, that you can be despised, that you can lose life itself, but that you cannot do a crooked thing. For you, let the only policy be honesty.

May you also possess the grand moral characteristic of courage. By this we do not mean impertinence, impudence, or self-conceit; but real courage to do and say calmly the right thing, and to go straight on at all hazards, though there should be none to give you a good word. I am astonished at the number of Christians who are afraid to speak the truth to their brethren. I thank God I can say this, there is no member of my church, no officer of the church, and no man in the world to whom I am afraid to say before his face what I would say behind his back. Under God I owe my position in my own church to the absence of all policy, and the habit of saying what I mean. The plan of making things pleasant all round is a perilous as well as a wicked one. If you say one thing to one man, and another to another, they will one day compare notes and find you out, and then you will be despised. The man of two faces will sooner or later be the object of contempt, and justly so. Above all things avoid cowardice,

for it makes men liars. If you have anything that you feel you ought to say about a man, let the measure of what you say be this—"How much dare I say to his face?" You must not allow yourselves a word more in censure of any man living. If that be your rule, your courage will save you from a thousand difficulties, and win you lasting respect.

Having the integrity and the courage, dear brethren, may you be gifted with an indomitable zeal. Zeal—what is it? How shall I describe it? Possess it, and you will know what it is. Be consumed with love for Christ, and let the flame burn continuously, not flaming up at public meetings and dying out in the routine work of every day. We need indomitable perseverance, dogged resolution, and a combination of sacred obstinacy, self-denial, holy gentleness, and invincible courage.

Excel also in one power, which is both mental and moral, namely, the power of concentrating all your forces upon the work to which you are called. Collect your thoughts, rally all your faculties, mass your energies, focus your capacities. Turn all the springs of your soul into one channel, causing it to flow onward in an undivided stream. Some men lack this quality. They scatter themselves and fail. Mass your battalions, and hurl them upon the enemy. Do not try to be great at this and great at that—to be "everything by turns, and nothing long;" but suffer your entire nature to be led in captivity by Jesus Christ, and lay everything at his dear feet who bled and died for you.

4. Above all these, we need *spiritual qualifications*, graces which must be wrought in us by the Lord himself. This is the main matter, I am sure. Other things are precious, but this is priceless; we must be rich towards God.

We need to know ourselves. The preacher should be great in the science of the heart, the philosophy of inward experience. There are two schools of experience, and neither is content to learn from the other; let us be content, however, to learn from both. The one school speaks of the child of God as one who knows the deep depravity of his heart, who understands the loathsomeness of his nature, and daily feels that in his flesh there dwelleth no good thing. "That man has not the life of God in his soul," say they, "who does not know and feel this, and feel it by bitter and painful experience from day to day." It is in vain to talk to them about liberty, and joy in the Holy Ghost; they will not have it. Let us learn from these one-sided brethren. They know much that should be known, and woe to that minister

who ignores their set of truths. Martin Luther used to say that temptation is the best teacher for a minister. There is truth on that side of the question. Another school of believers dwell much upon the glorious work of the Spirit of God, and rightly and blessedly so. They believe in the Spirit of God as a cleansing power, sweeping the Augean stable of the soul, and making it into a temple for God. But frequently they talk as if they had ceased to sin, or to be annoyed by temptation; they glory as if the battle were already fought, and the victory won. Let us learn from these brethren. All the truth they can teach us let us know. Let us become familiar with the hill-tops, and the glory that shines thereon, the Hermons and the Tabors, where we may be transfigured with our Lord. Do not be afraid of becoming too holy. Do not be afraid of being too full of the Holy Spirit. I would have you wise on all sides, and able to deal with man both in his conflicts and in his joys, as one familiar with both. Know where Adam left you; know where the Spirit of God has placed you. Do not know either of these so exclusively as to forget the other. I believe that if any men are likely to cry, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" it will always be the ministers, because we need to be tempted in all points, so that we may be able to comfort others. In a railway carriage last week I saw a poor man with his leg placed upon the seat. An official happening to see him in this posture, remarked, "Those cushions were not made for you to put your dirty boots on." As soon as the guard was gone the man put up his leg again, and said to me, "He has never broken his leg in two places, I am sure, or he would not be so sharp with me." When I have heard brethren who have lived at ease, enjoying good incomes, condemning others who are much tried, because they could not rejoice in their fashion, I have felt that they knew nothing of the broken bones which others have to carry throughout the whole of their pilgrimage.

Brethren, know man in Christ, and out of Christ. Study him at his best, and study him at his worst; know his anatomy, his secrets, and his passions. You cannot do this by books; you must have personal spiritual experience; God alone can give you that.

Among spiritual acquirements, it is beyond all other things needful to know him who is the sure remedy for all human diseases. Know Jesus. Sit at his feet. Consider his nature, his work, his sufferings, his glory. Rejoice in his presence: commune with him from day to day. To know Christ is to understand the most

excellent of sciences. You cannot fail to be wise if you commune with wisdom; you cannot miss of strength if you have fellowship with the mighty Son of God. I saw the other day in an Italian grotto a little fern, which grew where its leaves continually glistened and danced in the spray of a fountain. It was always green, and neither summer's drought nor winter's cold affected it. So let us for ever abide under the sweet influence of Jesus' love. Dwell in God, brethren; do not occasionally visit him, but abide in him. They say in Italy that where the sun does not enter the physician must. Where Jesus does not shine the soul is sick. Bask in his beams and you shall be vigorous in the service of the Lord. Last Sunday night I had a text which mastered me:—"No man knoweth the Son but the Father." I told the people that poor sinners who had gone to Jesus and trusted him, thought they knew him, but that they knew only a little of him. Saints of sixty years' experience, who have walked with him every day, think they know him; but they are only beginners yet. The perfect spirits before the throne, who have been for five thousand years perpetually adoring him, perhaps think they know him, but they do not to the full. "No man knoweth the Son but the Father." He is so glorious, that only the infinite God has full knowledge of him, therefore there will be no limit to our study, or narrowness in our line of thought, if we make our Lord the great object of all our meditations.

Brethren, as the outcome of this, if we are to be strong men, we must be conformed to our Lord. Oh, to be like him! Blessed be that cross on which we shall suffer, if we suffer for being made like unto the Lord Jesus. If we obtain conformity to Christ, we shall have a wondrous unction upon our ministry, and without that, what is a ministry worth?

In a word, we must labour for holiness of character. What is holiness? Is it not wholeness of character? a balanced condition in which there is neither lack nor redundancy? It is not morality, that is a cold lifeless statue; holiness is life. You must have holiness; and, dear brethren, if you should fail in mental qualifications (as I hope you will not), and if you should have a slender measure of the oratorical faculty (as I trust you will not), yet, depend upon it, a holy life is, in itself, a wonderful power, and will make up for many deficiencies; it is, in fact, the best sermon the best man can deliver. Let us resolve that all the purity which can be had we will have, that all the sanctity which can be reached we will obtain, and that all the likeness to Christ that is possible in this world of sin shall certainly be in us through the work of the

Spirit of God. The Lord lift us all as a college right up to a higher platform, and he shall have the glory!

5. Still I have not done, dear brethren. I have to say to you, go forward in *actual work*, for, after all, we shall be known by what we have done. We ought to be mighty in deed as well as word. There are good brethren in the world who are impractical. The grand doctrine of the second advent makes them stand with open mouths, peering into the skies, so that I am ready to say, "Ye men of Plymouth, why stand ye here gazing up into heaven?" The fact that Jesus Christ is to come is not a reason for star-gazing, but for working in the power of the Holy Ghost. Be not so taken up with speculations as to prefer a Bible reading over a dark passage in the Revelation to teaching in a ragged-school or discoursing to the poor concerning Jesus. We must have done with day-dreams, and get to work. I believe in eggs, but we must get chickens out of them. I do not mind how big your egg is; it may be an ostrich's egg if you like, but if there is nothing in it, pray clear away the shells. If something comes of it, God bless your speculations, and even if you should go a little further than I think it wise to venture, still, if you are more useful, God be praised for it. We want facts—deeds done, souls saved. It is all very well to write essays, but what souls have you saved from going down to hell? Your excellent management of your school interests me, but how many children have been brought into the church by it? We are glad to hear of those special meetings, but how many have really been born to God in them? Are saints edified? Are sinners converted? To swing to and fro on a five-barred gate is not progress, yet some seem to think so. I see them in perpetual Elysium, humming over to themselves and their friends, "We are very comfortable." God save us from living in comfort while sinners are sinking into hell. In travelling along the mountain roads in Switzerland you will continually see marks of the boring-rod; and in every minister's life there should be traces of stern labour. Brethren, do something; do something; do something. While committees waste their time over resolutions, do something. While Societies and Unions are making constitutions, let us win souls. Too often we discuss, and discuss, and discuss, and Satan laughs in his sleeve. It is time we had done planning and sought something to plan. I pray you, be men of action all of you. Get to work and quit yourselves like men. Old Suwarrow's idea of war is mine: "Forward and strike! No theory! Attack! Form column! Charge bayonets! Plunge into the centre of the enemy." Our

one aim is to save sinners, and this we are not to talk about, but to do in the power of God.

6. Lastly, and here I am going to deliver a message which weighs upon me,—Go forward in the matter of *the choice of your sphere of action*. I plead this day for those who cannot plead for themselves, namely, the great outlying masses of the heathen world. Our existing pulpits are tolerably well supplied, but we need men who will build on new foundations. Who will do this? Are we, as a company of faithful men, clear in our consciences about the heathen? Millions have never heard the name of Jesus. Hundreds of millions have seen a missionary only once in their lives, and know nothing of our King. Shall we let them perish? Can we go to our beds and sleep while China, India, Japan, and other nations are being damned? Are we clear of their blood? Have they no claim upon us? We ought to put it on this footing—not “Can I prove that I *ought* to go?” but “Can I prove that I *ought not* to go?” When a man can prove honestly that he ought not to go then he is clear, but not else. What answer do you give, my brethren? I put it to you man by man. I am not raising a question among you which I have not honestly put to myself. I have felt that if some of our leading ministers would go forth it would have a grand effect in stimulating the churches, and I have honestly asked myself whether I ought to go. After balancing the whole thing I feel bound to keep my place, and I think the judgment of most Christians would be the same; but I hope I would cheerfully go if it were my duty to do so. Brethren, put yourselves through the same process. We must have the heathen converted; God has myriads of his elect among them, we must go and search for them till we find them. Many difficulties are now removed, all lands are open to us, and distance is annihilated. True we have not the Pentecostal gift of tongues, but languages are now readily acquired, while the art of printing is a full equivalent for the lost gift. The dangers incident to missions ought not to keep any true man back, even if they were very great, but they are now reduced to a minimum. There are hundreds of places where the cross of Christ is unknown, to which we can go without risk. Who will go? The men who ought to go are young brethren of good abilities who have not yet taken upon themselves family cares.

Each student entering the college should consider this matter, and surrender himself to the work unless there are conclusive reasons for his not doing so. It is a fact that even for the

colonies it is very difficult to find men, for I have had openings in Australia which I have been obliged to decline. It ought not to be so. Surely there is some self-sacrifice among us yet, and some among us are willing to be exiled for Jesus. The Mission languishes for want of men. If the men were forthcoming the liberality of the church would supply their needs, and, in fact, the liberality of the church has made the supply, and yet there are not the men to go. I shall never feel, brethren, that we, as a band of men, have done our duty until we see our comrades fighting for Jesus in every land in the van of conflict. I believe that if God moves you to go, you will be among the best of missionaries, because you will make the preaching of the gospel the great feature of your work, and that is God's sure way of power. I wish that our churches would imitate that of Pastor Harms, in Germany, where every member was consecrated to God indeed and of a truth. The farmers gave the produce of their lands, the working-men their labour; one gave a large house to be used as a missionary college, and Pastor Harms obtained money for a ship which he fitted out, to make voyages to Africa, and then he sent missionaries, and little companies of his people with them, to form Christian communities among the Bushmen. When will our churches be equally self-denying and energetic? Look at the Moravians! how every man and woman becomes a missionary, and how much they do in consequence. Let us catch their spirit. Is it a right spirit? Then it is right for us to have it. It is not enough for us to say, "Those Moravians are very wonderful people!" We ought to be wonderful people too. Christ did not purchase the Moravians any more than he purchased us; they are under no more obligation to make sacrifices than we are. Why then this backwardness? When we read of heroic men who gave up all for Jesus, we are not merely to admire, but to imitate them. Who will imitate them now? Come to the point. Are there not some among you willing to consecrate yourselves to the Lord? "Forward" is the watchword to-day! Are there no bold spirits to lead the van? Pray all of you that during this Pentecost the Spirit may say, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work."

Forward! In God's name, FORWARD!!

LECTURE III.

The Need of Decision for the Truth.

SOME things are true and some things are false:—I regard that as an axiom; but there are many persons who evidently do not believe it. The current principle of the present age seems to be, “Some things are either true or false, according to the point of view from which you look at them. Black is white, and white is black according to circumstances; and it does not particularly matter which you call it. Truth of course is true, but it would be rude to say that the opposite is a lie; we must not be bigoted, but remember the motto, ‘So many men, so many minds,’” Our forefathers were particular about maintaining landmarks; they had strong notions about fixed points of revealed doctrine, and were very tenacious of what they believed to be scriptural; their fields were protected by hedges and ditches, but their sons have grubbed up the hedges, filled up the ditches, laid all level, and played at leap-frog with the boundary stones. The school of modern thought laughs at the ridiculous positiveness of Reformers and Puritans; it is advancing in glorious liberality, and before long will publish a grand alliance between heaven and hell, or, rather, an amalgamation of the two establishments upon terms of mutual concession, allowing falsehood and truth to lie side by side, like the lion with the lamb. Still, for all that, my firm old-fashioned belief is that some doctrines are true, and that statements which are diametrically opposite to them are not true,—that when “No” is the fact, “Yes” is out of court, and that when “Yes” can be justified, “No” must be abandoned. I believe that the gentleman who has for so long a time perplexed our courts is either Sir Roger Tichborne or somebody else; I am not yet able to conceive of his being the true heir and an impostor at the same time. Yet in religious matters the fashionable standpoint is somewhere in that latitude.

We have a fixed faith to preach, my brethren, and we are sent forth with a definite message from God. We are not left to fabricate the message as we go along. We are not sent forth by our Master with a general commission arranged on this fashion—"As you shall think in your heart and invent in your head, so preach. Keep abreast of the times. Whatever the people want to hear, tell them that, and they shall be saved." Verily, we read not so. There is something definite in the Bible. It is not quite a lump of wax to be shaped at our will, or a roll of cloth to be cut according to the prevailing fashion. Your great thinkers evidently look upon the Scriptures as a box of letters for them to play with, and make what they like of, or a wizard's bottle, out of which they may pour anything they choose, from atheism up to spiritualism. I am too old-fashioned to fall down and worship this theory. There is something told me in the Bible—told me for certain—not put before me with a "but" and a "perhaps," and an "if," and a "may be," and fifty thousand suspicions behind it, so that really the long and the short of it is, that it may not be so at all; but revealed to me as infallible fact, which must be believed, the opposite of which is deadly error, and comes from the father of lies.

Believing, therefore, that there is such a thing as truth, and such a thing as falsehood, that there are truths in the Bible, and that the gospel consists in something definite which is to be believed by men, it becomes us to be decided as to what we teach, and to teach it in a decided manner. We have to deal with men who will be either lost or saved, and they certainly will not be saved by erroneous doctrine. We have to deal with God, whose servants we are, and he will not be honoured by our delivering falsehoods; neither will he give us a reward, and say, "Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast mangled the gospel as judiciously as any man that ever lived before thee." We stand in a very solemn position, and ours should be the spirit of old Micaiah, who said, "As the Lord my God liveth, before whom I stand, whatsoever the Lord saith unto me that will I speak." Neither less nor more than God's word are we called to state, but that word we are bound to declare in a spirit which convinces the sons of men that, whatever they may think of it, we believe God, and are not to be shaken in our confidence in him.

Brethren, in what ought we to be positive? Well, there are gentlemen alive who imagine that there are no fixed principles to go upon. "Perhaps a few doctrines," said one to me, "perhaps a

few doctrines may be considered as established. It is, perhaps, ascertained that there is a God; but one ought not to dogmatise upon his personality: a great deal may be said for pantheism." Such men creep into the ministry, but they are generally cunning enough to conceal the breadth of their minds beneath Christian phraseology, thus acting in consistency with their principles, for their fundamental rule is that truth is of no consequence.

As for us—as for me, at any rate—I am certain that there is a God, and I mean to preach it as a man does who is absolutely sure. He is the Maker of heaven and earth, the Master of providence, and the Lord of grace: let his name be blessed for ever and ever! We will have no questions and debates as to him.

We are equally certain that the book which is called "the Bible" is his word, and is inspired: not inspired in the sense in which Shakespeare, and Milton, and Dryden may be inspired, but in an infinitely higher sense; so that, provided we have the exact text, we regard the words themselves as infallible. We believe that everything stated in the book that comes to us from God is to be accepted by us as his sure testimony, and nothing less than that. God forbid we should be ensnared by those various interpretations of the *modus* of inspiration, which amount to little more than frittering it away. The book is a divine production; it is perfect, and is the last court of appeal—"the judge which ends the strife." I would as soon dream of blaspheming my Maker as of questioning the infallibility of his word.

We are also sure concerning the doctrine of the blessed Trinity. We cannot explain how the Father, Son, and Spirit can be each one distinct and perfect in himself, and yet that these three are one, so that there is but one God; yet we do verily believe it, and mean to preach it, notwithstanding Unitarian, Socinian, Sabellian, or any other error. We shall hold fast evermore the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity.

And, brethren, there will be no uncertain sound from us as to the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot leave the blood out of our ministry, or the life of it will be gone; for we may say of the gospel, "The blood is the life thereof." The proper substitution of Christ, the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, on the behalf of his people, that they might live through him,—this we must publish till we die.

Neither can we waver in our mind for a moment concerning the great and glorious Spirit of God—the fact of his existence,

his personality, the power of his working, the necessity of his influences, the certainty that no man is regenerated except by him; that we are born again by the Spirit of God, and that the Spirit dwells in believers, and is the author of all good in them, their sanctifier and preserver, without whom they can do no good thing whatsoever:—we shall not at all hesitate as to preaching these truths.

The absolute necessity of the new birth is also a certainty. We come down with demonstration when we touch that point. We shall never poison our people with the notion that a moral reformation will suffice, but we will over and over again say to them, “Ye must be born again.” We have not got into the condition of the Scotch minister who, when old John Macdonald preached to his congregation a sermon to sinners, remarked, “Well, Mr. Macdonald, that was a very good sermon which you have preached, but it is very much out of place, for I do not know one single unregenerate person in my congregation.” Poor soul, he was in all probability unregenerated himself. No, we dare not flatter our hearers, but we must continue to tell them that they are born sinners, and must be born saints, or they will never see the face of God with acceptance.

The tremendous evil of sin—we shall not hesitate about that. We shall speak on that matter both sorrowfully and positively; and, though some very wise men raise difficult questions about hell, we shall not fail to declare the terrors of the Lord, and the fact that the Lord has said, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.”

Neither will we ever give an uncertain sound as to the glorious truth that salvation is all of grace. If ever we ourselves are saved, we know that sovereign grace alone has done it, and we feel it must be the same with others. We will publish, “Grace! grace! grace!” with all our might, living and dying.

We shall be very decided, also, as to justification by faith; for salvation is “Not of works, lest any man should boast.” “Life in a look at the Crucified One” will be our message. Trust in the Redeemer will be that saving grace which we will pray the Lord to implant in all our hearers’ hearts.

And everything else which we believe to be true in the Scriptures we shall preach with decision. If there be questions which may be regarded as moot, or comparatively unimportant, we shall speak with such a measure of decision about them as may be comely. But points which cannot be moot, which are essential

and fundamental, will be declared by us without any stammering, without any enquiring of the people, "What would you wish us to say?" Yes, and without the apology, "Those are my views, but other people's views may be correct." We ought to preach the gospel, not as *our views* at all, but as the mind of God—the testimony of Jehovah concerning his own Son, and in reference to salvation for lost men. If we had been entrusted with the making of the gospel, we might have altered it to suit the taste of this modest century, but never having been employed to originate the good news, but merely to repeat it, we dare not stir beyond the record. What we have been taught of God we teach. If we do not do this, we are not fit for our position. If I have a servant in my house, and I send a message by her to the door, and she amends it on her own authority, she may take away the very soul of the message by so doing, and she will be responsible for what she has done. She will not remain long in my employ, for I need a servant who will repeat what I say, as nearly as possible, word for word; and if she does so, I am responsible for the message, she is not. If any one should be angry with her on account of what she said, they would be very unjust; their quarrel lies with me, and not with the person whom I employ to act as mouth for me. He that hath God's Word, let him speak it faithfully, and he will have no need to answer gainsayers, except with a "Thus saith the Lord." This, then, is the matter concerning which we are decided.

How are we to show this decision? We need not be careful to answer this question, our decision will show itself in its own way. If we really believe a truth, we shall be decided about it. Certainly we are not to show our decision by that obstinate, furious, wolfish bigotry which cuts off every other body from the chance and hope of salvation and the possibility of being regenerate or even decently honest if they happen to differ from us about the colour of a scale of the great leviathan. Some individuals appear to be naturally cut on the cross; they are manufactured to be rasps, and rasp they will. Sooner than not quarrel with you they would raise a question upon the colour of invisibility, or the weight of a non-existent substance. They are up in arms with you, not because of the importance of the question under discussion, but because of the far greater importance of their being always the Pope of the party. Don't go about the world with your fist doubled up for fighting, carrying a theological revolver in the leg of your trousers. There is no sense in being a sort of doctrinal

game-cock, to be carried about to show your spirit, or a terrier of orthodoxy, ready to tackle heterodox rats by the score. Practise the *suaviter in modo* as well as the *fortiter in re*. Be prepared to fight, and always have your sword buckled on your thigh, but wear a scabbard; there can be no sense in waving your weapon about before everybody's eyes to provoke conflict, after the manner of our beloved friends of the Emerald Isle, who are said to take their coats off at Donnybrook Fair, and drag them along the ground, crying out, while they flourish their shillelahs, "Will any gentleman be so good as to tread on the tail of my coat?" These are theologians of such warm, generous blood, that they are never at peace till they are fully engaged in war.

If you really believe the gospel, you will be decided for it in more sensible ways. Your very tone will betray your sincerity; you will speak like a man who has something to say, which he knows to be true. Have you ever watched a rogue when he is about to tell a falsehood? Have you noticed the way in which he has to mouth it? It takes a long time to be able to tell a lie well, for the facial organs were not originally constituted and adapted for the complacent delivery of falsehood. When a man knows he is telling you the truth, everything about him corroborates his sincerity. Any accomplished cross-examining lawyer knows within a little whether a witness is genuine or a deceiver. Truth has her own air and manner, her own tone and emphasis. Yonder is a blundering, ignorant country fellow in the witness-box; the counsel tries to bamboozle and confuse him, if possible, but all the while he feels that he is an honest witness, and he says to himself, "I should like to shake this fellow's evidence, for it will greatly damage my side of the question." There ought to be always that same air of truth about the Christian minister; only as he is not only bearing witness to the truth, but wants other people to feel that truth and own the power of it, he ought to have more decision in his tone than a mere witness who is stating facts which may be believed or not without any serious consequences following either way. Luther was the man for decision. Nobody doubted that he believed what he spoke. He spoke with thunder, for there was lightning in his faith. The man preached all over, for his entire nature believed. You felt, "Well, he may be mad, or he may be altogether mistaken, but he assuredly believes what he says. He is the incarnation of faith; his heart is running over at his lips."

If we would show decision for the truth, we must not only do so by our tone and manner, but by our daily actions. A man's life is

always more forcible than his speech ; when men take stock of him they reckon his deeds as pounds and his words as pence. If his life and his doctrines disagree, the mass of lookers-on accept his practice and reject his preaching. A man may know a great deal about truth, and yet be a very damaging witness on its behalf, because he is no credit to it. The quack who in the classic story cried up an infallible cure for colds, coughing and sneezing between every sentence of his panegyric, may serve as the image and symbol of an unholy minister. The Satyr in Æsop's fable was indignant with the man who blew hot and cold with the same mouth, and well he might be. I can conceive no surer method of prejudicing men against the truth, than by sounding her praises through the lips of men of suspicious character. When the devil turned preacher in our Lord's day, the Master bade him hold his peace ; he did not care for Satanic praises. It is very ridiculous to hear good truth from a bad man ; it is like flour in a coal-sack. When I was last in one of our Scottish towns I heard of an idiot at the asylum, who thought himself a great historic character. With much solemnity the poor fellow put himself into an impressive attitude and exclaimed, "I'm Sir William Wallace ! Gie me a bit of bacea." The descent from Sir William Wallace to a piece of tobacco was too absurd for gravity ; yet it was neither so absurd nor so sad as to see a professed ambassador of the cross covetous, worldly, passionate, or sluggish. How strange it would be to hear a man say, "I am a servant of the Most High God, and I will go wherever I can get the most salary. I am called to labour for the glory of Jesus only, and I will go nowhere unless the church is of most respectable standing. For me to live is Christ, but I cannot do it under five hundred pounds per annum."

Brother, if the truth be in thee it will flow out of thine entire being as the perfume streams from every bough of the sandal-wood tree ; it will drive thee onward as the trade-wind speeds the ships, filling all their sails ; it will consume thy whole nature with its energy as the forest fire burns up all the trees of the wood. Truth has not fully given thee her friendship till all thy doings are marked with her seal.

We must show our decision for the truth by the sacrifices we are ready to make. This is, indeed, the most efficient as well as the most trying method. We must be ready to give up anything and everything for the sake of the principles which we have espoused, and must be ready to offend our best supporters, to alienate our warmest friends, sooner than belie our consciences.

We must be ready to be beggars in purse, and offscourings in reputation, rather than act treacherously. We can die, but we cannot deny the truth. The cost is already counted, and we are determined to buy the truth at any price, and sell it at no price. Too little of this spirit is abroad now-a-days. Men have a saving faith, and save their own persons from trouble; they have great discernment, and know on which side their bread is buttered; they are large-hearted, and are all things to all men, if by any means they may save a sum. There are plenty of curs about, who would follow at the heel of any man who would keep them in meat. They are among the first to bark at decision, and call it obstinate dogmatism, and ignorant bigotry. Their condemnatory verdict causes us no distress; it is what we expected.

Above all we must show our zeal for the truth by continually, in season and out of season, endeavouring to maintain it in the tenderest and most loving manner, but still very earnestly and firmly. We must not talk to our congregations as if we were half asleep. Our preaching must not be articulate snoring. There must be power, life, energy, vigour. We must throw our whole selves into it, and show that the zeal of God's house has eaten us up.

How are we to manifest our decision? Certainly not by harping on one string and repeating over and over again the same truths with the declaration that we believe them. Such a course of action could only suggest itself to the incompetent. The barrel-organ grinder is not a pattern of decision, he may have persistency, but that is not the same thing as consistency. I could indicate certain brethren who have learned four or five doctrines, and they grind them over and over again with everlasting monotony. I am always glad when they grind their tunes in some street far removed from my abode. To weary with perpetual repetition is not the way to manifest our firmness in the faith.

My brethren, you will *strengthen your decision* by the recollection of the importance of these truths to your own souls. Are your sins forgiven? Have you a hope of heaven? How do the solemnities of eternity affect you? Certainly you are not saved apart from these things, and therefore you must hold them, for you feel you are a lost man if they be not true. You have to die, and, being conscious that these things alone can sustain you in the last article, you hold them with all your might. You cannot give them up. How can a man resign a truth which he feels to be vitally important to his own soul? He daily feels—"I have to live on it, I

have to die on it, I am wretched now, and lost for ever apart from it, and therefore by the help of God I cannot relinquish it."

Your own experience from day to day will sustain you, beloved brethren. I hope you have realised already and will experience much more the power of the truth which you preach. I believe the doctrine of election, because I am quite sure that if God had not chosen me I should never have chosen him; and I am sure he chose me before I was born, or else he never would have chosen me afterwards; and he must have elected me for reasons unknown to me, for I never could find any reason in myself why he should have looked upon me with special love. So I am forced to accept that doctrine. I am bound to the doctrine of the depravity of the human heart, because I find myself depraved in heart, and have daily proofs that there dwelleth in my flesh no good thing. I cannot help holding that there must be an atonement before there can be pardon, because my conscience demands it, and my peace depends upon it. The little court within my own heart is not satisfied unless some retribution be exacted for dishonour done to God. They tell us sometimes that such and such statements are not true; but when we are able to reply that we have tried them and proved them, what answer is there to such reasoning? A man propounds the wonderful discovery that honey is not sweet. "But I had some for breakfast, and I found it very sweet," say you, and your reply is conclusive. He tells you that salt is poisonous, but you point to your own health, and declare that you have eaten salt these twenty years. He says that to eat bread is a mistake—a vulgar error, an antiquated absurdity; but at each meal you make his protest the subject for a merry laugh. If you are daily and habitually experienced in the truth of God's Word, I am not afraid of your being shaken in mind in reference to it. Those young fellows who never felt conviction of sin, but obtained their religion as they get their bath in the morning, by jumping into it—these will as readily leap out of it as they leaped in. Those who feel neither the joys nor yet the depressions of spirit which indicate spiritual life, are torpid, and their palsied hand has no firm grip of truth. Mere skimmers of the Word, who, like swallows, touch the water with their wings, are the first to fly from one land to another as personal considerations guide them. They believe this, and then believe that, for, in truth, they believe nothing intensely. If you have ever been dragged through the mire and clay of soul-despair, if you have been turned upside down, and wiped out like a dish as to all your own strength and pride,

and have then been filled with the joy and peace of God, through Jesus Christ, I will trust you among fifty thousand infidels. Whenever I hear the sceptic's stale attacks upon the Word of God, I smile within myself, and think, "Why, you simpleton! how can you urge such trifling objections? I have felt, in the contentions of my own unbelief, ten times greater difficulties." We who have contended with horses are not to be wearied by footmen. Gordon Cumming and other lion-killers are not to be scared by wild cats, nor will those who have stood foot to foot with Satan resign the field to pretentious sceptics, or any other of the evil one's inferior servants.

If, my brethren, we have fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, we cannot be made to doubt the fundamentals of the gospel; neither can we be undecided. A glimpse at the thorn-crowned head and pierced hands and feet is the sure cure for "modern doubt" and all its vagaries. Get into the "Rock of Ages, cleft for you," and you will abhor the quicksand. That eminent American preacher, the seraphic Summerfield, when he lay a-dying, turned round to a friend in the room and said, "I have taken a look into eternity. Oh, if I could come back and preach again, how differently would I preach from what I have done before!" Take a look into eternity, brethren, if you want to be decided. Remember how Atheist met Christian and Hopeful on the road to the New Jerusalem, and said, "There is no celestial country. I have gone a long way, and could not find it." Then Christian said to Hopeful, "Did we not see it from the top of Mount Clear, when we were with the shepherds?" There was an answer! So when men have said, "There is no Christ—there is no truth in religion," we have replied to them, "Have we not sat under his shadow with great delight? Was not his fruit sweet to our taste? Go with your scepticisms to those who do not know whom they have believed. We have tasted and handled the good word of life. What we have seen and heard, that we do testify; and whether men receive our testimony or not, we cannot but speak it, for we speak what we do know, and testify what we have seen." That, my brethren, is the sure way to be decided.

And now, lastly, *why should we at this particular age be decided and bold?* We should be so because this age is a doubting age. It swarms with doubters as Egypt of old with frogs. You rub against them everywhere. Everybody is doubting everything, not merely in religion, but in politics and social economics, in everything indeed. It is the era of progress, and I suppose it must be the

age, therefore, of unloosening, in order that the whole body politic may move on a little further. Well, brethren, as the age is doubting, it is wise for us to put our foot down and stand still where we are sure we have truth beneath us. Perhaps, if it were an age of bigotry, and men would not learn, we might be more inclined to listen to new teachers; but now the Conservative side must be ours, or rather the Radical side, which is the truly Conservative side. We must go back to the radix, or root of truth, and stand sternly by that which God has revealed, and so meet the wavering of the age. Our eloquent neighbour, Mr. Arthur Mursell, has well hit off the present age:—

“Have we gone too far in saying that modern thought has grown impatient with the Bible, the gospel, and the cross? Let us see. What part of the Bible has it not assailed? The Pentateuch it has long ago swept from the canon as unauthentic. What we read about the creation and the flood is branded as fable. And the laws about the landmarks, from which Solomon was not ashamed to quote, are buried or laid upon the shelf.

“Different men assail different portions of the book, and various systems level their batteries of prejudice at various points; until by some the Scripture is torn all to pieces, and cast to the four winds of heaven, and by even the most forbearing of the cultured Vandals of what is called modern thought, it is condensed into a thin pamphlet of morality, instead of the tome of teaching through which we have eternal life. There is hardly a prophet but has been *reviewed* by the wiseacres of the day in precisely the same spirit as they would review a work from Mudie’s library. The Temanite and the Shuhite never misconstrued the baited Job with half the prejudice of the acknowledged intellects of our time. Isaiah, instead of being sawn asunder, is quartered and hacked in pieces. The weeping prophet is drowned in his own tears. Ezekiel is ground to atoms amidst his wheels. Daniel is devoured bodily by the learned lions. And Jonah is swallowed by the deep monsters with a more inexorable voracity than the fish, for they never cast him up again. The histories and events of the great chronicle are rudely contradicted and gainsaid, because some schoolmaster with a slate and pencil cannot bring his sums right. And every miracle which the might of the Lord wrought for the favour of his people, or the frustration of their foes, is pooh-poohed as an absurdity, because the professors cannot do the like with their enchantments. A few of what are called miracles may be credible, because our leaders think they can do them themselves.

A few natural phenomena, which some doctor can show to a company of martinets in a dark room, or with a table-full of apparatus, will account for the miracle of the Red Sea. An aeronaut goes up in a balloon, and then comes down again, and quite explains away the pillar of fire and of cloud, and trifles of that kind. And so our great men are satisfied when they think that their toy wand has swallowed up the wand of Aaron: but when Aaron's wand threatens to swallow up theirs, they say that part is not authentic, and that miracle never occurred.

“Nor does the New Testament fare any better than the Old at the hands of these invaders. There is no toll of deference levied on their homage as they pass across the line. They recognise no voice of warning with the cry, ‘Take thy shoes from off thy feet, because the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.’ The mind which halts in its career of spiritual rapine on any reverential pretext, is denounced as ignorant or slavish. To hesitate to stamp the hoof upon a lily or a spring flower is the sentimental folly of a child, and the vanguard of the thought of the age has only pity and a sneer for such a feeling, as it stalks upon its boasted march of progress. We are told that the legends of our nurseries are obsolete, and that broader views are gaining ground with thoughtful minds. We are unwilling to believe it. The truth is, that a few, a very few, thoughtful men, whose thinking consists in negation from first to last, and whose minds are tortured with a chronic twist or curve, which turns them into intellectual notes of interrogation, have laid the basis of this system; these few honest doubters have been joined by a larger band who are simply restless; and these again by men who are inimical to the spirit and the truths of Scripture, and together they have formed a coterie, and called themselves the leaders of the thought of the age. They have a following, it is true; but of whom does it consist? Of the mere satellites of fashion. Of the wealth, the pedantry, and the stupidity of our large populations. A string of carriages is seen ‘setting down’ and ‘taking up’ at the door where an advanced professor is to lecture, and because the milliner is advertised from floor to ceiling in the lecture room, these views are said to be gaining ground. But in an age of fashion like this, who ever suspects these minions of the mode of having any views at all? It becomes respectable to follow a certain name for a time, and so the vainlings go to follow the name and to display the dress. But as to views, one would no more suspect such people of having any views than they would dream of charging more than a tenth part

of the crowds who go to the Royal Academy's exhibition with understanding the laws of perspective. It is the thing to do: and so every one who has a dress to show and a lounge to air, goes to show it, and all who would be in the fashion (and who would not?) are bound to advance with the times. And hence we find the times advancing over the sacred precincts of the New Testament, as though it were the floor of St. Alban's or of a professor's lecture room; and ladies drag their trains, and dandies set their dress-boots on the authenticity of this, or the authority of that, or the inspiration of the other. People who never heard of Strauss, of Bauer, or of Tübingen, are quite prepared to say that our Saviour was but a well-meaning man, who had a great many faults, and made a great many mistakes; that his miracles, as recorded in the New Testament, were in part imaginary, and in part accountable by natural theories; that the raising of Lazarus never occurred, since the Gospel of John is a forgery from first to last; that the atonement is a doctrine to be scouted as bloody and unrighteous; that Paul was a fanatic who wrote unthinkingly, and that much of what bears his name was never written by him at all. Thus is the Bible rubbed through the tribulum of criticism from Genesis to Revelation, until, in the faith of the age in which we live, as represented by its so-called leaders, there are but a few inspired fragments here and there remaining."

Moreover, after all, this is not an earnestly doubting age; we live among a careless, frivolous race. If the doubters were honest there would be more infidel places of concourse than there are; but infidelity as an organised community does not prosper. Infidelity in London, open and avowed, has come down to one old corrugated iron shed opposite St. Luke's. I believe that is the present position of it. "The Hall of Science" is it not called? Its literature was carried on for a long time in half a shop in Fleet Street, that was all it could manage to support, and I don't know whether even that half shop is used now. It is a poor, doting, drivelling thing. In Tom Paine's time it bullied like a vigorous blasphemer, but it was outspoken, and, in its own way, downright and earnest in its outspokenness. It commanded in former days some names which one might mention with a measure of respect; Hume, to wit, and Bolingbroke, and Voltaire were great in talent, if not in character. But where now will you find a Hobbes or a Gibbon? The doubters now are usually doubters because they do not care about truth at all. They are indifferent altogether. Modern scepticism is playing and toying with truth; and it takes to

“modern thought” as an amusement, as ladies take to croquet or archery. This is nothing less than an age of millinery and dolls and comedy. Even good people do not believe out and out as their fathers used to do. Some even among Nonconformists are shamefully lax in their convictions; they have few masterly convictions such as would lead them to the stake, or even to imprisonment. Molluses have taken the place of men, and men are turned to jelly-fishes. Far from us be the desire to imitate them.

Moreover it is an age which is very impressible, and therefore I should like to see you very decided, that you may impress it. The wonderful progress made in England by the High Church movement shows that earnestness is power. The Ritualists believe something, and that fact has given them influence. To me their distinctive creed is intolerable nonsense, and their proceedings are childish foolery; but they have dared to go against the mob, and have turned the mob round to their side. Bravely did they battle, let us say it to their honour; when their churches became the scenes of riot and disorder, and there was raised the terrible howl of “No Popery” by the lower orders, they boldly confronted the foe and never winced. They went against the whole current of what was thought to be the deep-seated feeling of England in favour of Protestantism, and with scarcely a bishop to patronise them, and but few loaves and fishes of patronage, they have increased from a handful to become the dominant and most vital party in the Church of England, and to our intense surprise and horror they have brought people to receive again the Popery which we thought dead and buried. If anybody had told me twenty years ago that the witch of Endor would become Queen of England, I should as soon have believed it as that we should now have such a High Church development; but the fact is, the men were earnest and decided, and held what they believed most firmly, and did not hesitate to push their cause. The age, therefore, can be impressed; it will receive what is taught by zealous men, whether it be truth or falsehood. It may be objected that falsehood will be received the more readily; that is just possible, but anything will be accepted by men if you will but preach it with tremendous energy and living earnestness. If they will not receive it into their hearts in a spiritual sense, yet at any rate there will be a mental assent and consent, very much in proportion to the energy with which you proclaim it; ay, and God will bless our decision too, so that when the mind is gained by our earnestness, and the

attention is won by our zeal, the heart itself will be opened by the Spirit of God.

We must be decided. What have Dissenters been doing to a great extent lately but trying to be fine? How many of our ministers are labouring to be grand orators or intellectual thinkers? That is not the thing. Our young ministers have been dazzled by that, and have gone off to bray like wild asses under the notion that they would then be reputed to have come from Jerusalem, or to have been reared in Germany. The world has found them out. There is nothing now I believe that genuine Christians despise more than the foolish affectation of intellectualism. You will hear a good old deacon say, "Mr. So-and-so, whom we had here, was a very clever man, and preached wonderful sermons, but the cause has gone down through it. We can hardly support the minister, and we mean next time to have one of the old-fashioned ministers back again who believe in something and preach it. There will be no addition to our church else." Will you go out and tell the people that you believe you can say something, but you hardly know what; you are not quite sure that what you preach is correct, but the trust-deed requires you to say it, and therefore you say it? Why, you may cause fools and idiots to be pleased with you, and you will be sure to propagate infidelity, but you cannot do more. When a prophet comes forward he must speak as from the Lord, and if he cannot do that, let him go back to his bed. It is quite certain, dear friends, that now or never we must be decided, because the age is manifestly drifting. You cannot watch for twelve months without seeing how it is going down the tide; the anchors are pulled up, and the vessel is floating to destruction. It is drifting now, as near as I can tell you, south-east, and is nearing Cape Vatican, and if it drives much further in that direction it will be on the rocks of the Roman reef. We must get aboard her, and connect her with the glorious steam-tug of gospel truth, and drag her back. I should be glad if I could take her round by Cape Calvin, right up into the Bay of Calvary, and anchor her in the fair haven which is close over by Vera Cruz, or the cross. God grant us grace to do it. We must have a strong hand, and have our steam well up, and defy the current; and so by God's grace we shall both save this age and the generations yet to come.

LECTURE IV.

Open Air Preaching—A Sketch of its History.

THERE are some customs for which nothing can be pleaded, except that they are very old. In such cases antiquity is of no more value than the rust upon a counterfeit coin. It is, however, a happy circumstance when the usage of ages can be pleaded for a really good and scriptural practice, for it invests it with a halo of reverence. Now, it can be argued, with small fear of refutation, that open air preaching is as old as preaching itself. We are at full liberty to believe that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, when he prophesied, asked for no better pulpit than the hill-side, and that Noah, as a preacher of righteousness, was willing to reason with his cotemporaries in the ship-yard wherein his marvellous ark was builded. Certainly, Moses and Joshua found their most convenient place for addressing vast assemblies beneath the unpillared arch of heaven. Samuel closed a sermon in the field at Gilgal amid thunder and rain, by which the Lord rebuked the people and drove them to their knees. Elijah stood on Carmel, and challenged the vacillating nation, with "How long halt ye between two opinions?" Jonah, whose spirit was somewhat similar, lifted up his cry of warning in the streets of Nineveh, and in all her places of concourse gave forth the warning utterance, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" To hear Ezra and Nehemiah "all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate." Indeed, we find examples of open air preaching everywhere around us in the records of the Old Testament.

It may suffice us, however, to go back as far as the origin of our own holy faith, and there we hear the forerunner of the Saviour crying in the wilderness and lifting up his voice from the river's bank. Our Lord himself, who is yet more our pattern, delivered the larger proportion of his sermons on the mountain's side, or by the sea shore, or in the streets. Our Lord was to all

intents and purposes an open air preacher. He did not remain silent in the synagogue, but he was equally at home in the field. We have no discourse of his on record delivered in the chapel royal, but we have the sermon on the mount, and the sermon in the plain; so that the very earliest and most divine kind of preaching was practised out of doors by him who spake as never man spake.

There were gatherings of his disciples after his decease, within walls, especially that in the upper room; but the preaching was even then most frequently in the court of the temple, or in such other open spaces as were available. The notion of holy places and consecrated meeting-houses had not occurred to them as Christians; they preached in the temple because it was the chief place of concourse, but with equal earnestness "in every house they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ."

The apostles and their immediate successors delivered their message of mercy not only in their own hired houses, and in the synagogues, but also anywhere and everywhere as occasion served them. This may be gathered incidentally from the following statement of Eusebius. "The divine and admirable disciples of the apostles built up the superstructure of the churches, the foundations whereof the apostles had laid, in all places where they came; they everywhere prosecuted the preaching of the gospel, sowing the seeds of heavenly doctrine throughout the whole world. Many of the disciples then alive distributed their estates to the poor; and, leaving their own country, did the work of evangelists to those who had never yet heard the Christian faith, preaching Christ, and delivering the evangelical writings to them. No sooner had they planted the faith in any foreign countries, and ordained guides and pastors, to whom they committed the care of these new plantations, but they went to other nations, assisted by the grace and powerful working of the Holy Spirit. As soon as they began to preach the gospel the people flocked universally to them, and cheerfully worshipped the true God, the Creator of the world, piously and heartily believing in his name."

As the dark ages lowered, the best preachers of the gradually declining church were also preachers in the open air; as were also those itinerant friars and great founders of religious orders who kept alive such piety as remained. We hear of Berthold, of Ratisbon, with audiences of sixty or a hundred thousand, in a field near Glatz in Bohemia. There were also Bernards, and Bernardines, and Anthonys, and Thomases of great fame as travelling

preachers, of whom we cannot find time to speak particularly. Dr. Lavington, Bishop of Exeter, being short of other arguments, stated, as a proof that the Methodists were identical with the Papists, that the early Friar Preachers were great at holding forth in the open fields. Quoting from Ribadeneira, he mentions Peter of Verona, who had “a divine talent in preaching; neither churches, nor streets, nor market-places could contain the great concourse that resorted to hear his sermons.” The learned bishop might have easily multiplied his examples, as we also could do, but they would prove nothing more than that, for good or evil, field preaching is a great power.

When Antichrist had commenced its more universal sway, the Reformers before the Reformation were full often open air preachers, as, for instance, Arnold of Brescia, who denounced Papal usurpations at the very gates of the Vatican.

It would be very easy to prove that revivals of religion have usually been accompanied, if not caused, by a considerable amount of preaching out of doors, or in unusual places. The first avowed preaching of Protestant doctrine was almost necessarily in the open air, or in buildings which were not dedicated to worship, for these were in the hands of the Papacy. True, Wycliffe for a while preached the gospel in the church at Lutterworth; Huss, and Jerome, and Savonarola for a time delivered semi-gospel addresses in connection with the ecclesiastical arrangements around them; but when they began more fully to know and proclaim the gospel, they were driven to find other platforms. The Reformation when yet a babe was like the new-born Christ, and had not where to lay its head, but a company of men comparable to the heavenly host proclaimed it under the open heavens, where shepherds and common people heard them gladly. Throughout England we have several trees remaining called “gospel oaks.” There is one spot on the other side of the Thames known by the name of “Gospel Oak,” and I have myself preached at Addlestone, in Surrey, under the far-spreading boughs of an ancient oak, beneath which John Knox is said to have proclaimed the gospel during his sojourn in England. Full many a wild moor, and lone hill side, and secret spot in the forest have been consecrated in the same fashion, and traditions still linger over caves, and dells, and hill tops, where of old time the bands of the faithful met to hear the word of the Lord. Nor was it alone in solitary places that in days of yore the voice of the preacher was heard, for scarcely is there a market cross which has not served as a pulpit for itinerant gossellers. During

the lifetime of Wycliffe his missionaries traversed the country, everywhere preaching the word. An Act of Parliament of Richard II. (1382) sets it forth as a grievance of the clergy that a number of persons in frieze gowns went from town to town, without the license of the ordinaries, and preached not only in churches, but in churchyards, and market-places, and also at fairs. To hear these heralds of the cross the country people flocked in great numbers, and the soldiers mingled with the crowd, ready to defend the preachers with their swords if any offered to molest them. After Wycliffe's decease his followers scrupled not to use the same methods. It is specially recorded of William Swinderby that, "being excommunicated, and forbidden to preach in any church or churchyard, he made a pulpit of two mill-stones in the High-street of Leicester, and there preached 'in contempt of the bishop.' 'There,' says Knighton, 'you might see throngs of people from every part, as well from the town as the country, double the number there used to be when they might hear him lawfully.'"

In Germany and other continental countries the Reformation was greatly aided by the sermons delivered to the masses out of doors. We read of Lutheran preachers perambulating the country proclaiming the new doctrine to crowds in the market-places, and burial-grounds, and also on mountains and in meadows. At Goslar a Wittemberg student preached in a meadow planted with lime-trees, which procured for his hearers the designation of "the Lime-tree Brethren." D'Aubigné tells us that at Appenzel, as the crowds could not be contained in the churches, the preaching was held in the fields and public squares, and, notwithstanding keen opposition, the hills, meadows, and mountains echoed with the glad tidings of salvation. In the life of Farel we meet with incidents connected with out-of-doors ministry; for instance, when at Metz he preached his first sermon in the churchyard of the Dominicans, his enemies caused all the bells to be tolled, but his voice of thunder overpowered the sound. In Neuchâtel we are told that "the whole town became his church. He preached in the market-place, in the streets, at the gates, before the houses, and in the squares, and with such persuasion and effect that he won over many to the gospel. The people crowded to hear his sermons, and could not be kept back either by threats or persuasions."

From Dr. Wylie's "History of Protestantism" I borrow the following:—"It is said that the first field-preaching in the Nether-

lands took place on the 14th of June, 1566, and was held in the neighbourhood of Ghent. The preacher was Herman Modet, who had formerly been a monk, but was now the reformed pastor at Oudenard. ‘This man,’ says a Popish chronicler, ‘was the first who ventured to preach in public, and there were 7,000 persons at his first sermon.’ The second great field-preaching took place on the 23rd of July following, the people assembling in a large meadow in the vicinity of Ghent. The ‘Word’ was precious in those days, and the people, eagerly thirsting to hear it, prepared to remain two days consecutively on the ground. Their arrangements more resembled an army pitching their camp than a peaceful multitude assembled for worship. Around the worshippers was a wall of barricades in the shape of carts and waggons. Sentinels were placed at all the entrances. A rude pulpit of planks was hastily run up and placed aloft on a cart. Modet was preacher, and around him were many thousands of persons, who listened with their pikes, hatchets, and guns lying by their sides ready to be grasped on a sign from the sentinels who kept watch all around the assembly. In front of the entrances were erected stalls, whereat pedlars offered prohibited books to all who wished to buy. Along the roads running into the country were stationed certain persons, whose office it was to bid the casual passenger turn in and hear the Gospel. When the services were finished, the multitude would repair to other districts, where they encamped after the same fashion, and remained for the same space of time, and so passed through the whole of West Flanders. At these conventicles the Psalms of David, which had been translated into Low Dutch from the version of Clement Marot, and Theodore Beza, were always sung. The odes of the Hebrew king, pealed forth by from five to ten thousand voices, and borne by the breeze over the woods and meadows, might be heard at great distances, arresting the ploughman as he turned the furrow, or the traveller as he pursued his way, and making him stop and wonder whence the minstrelsy proceeded.” It is most interesting to observe that congregational singing is sure to revive at the same moment as gospel-preaching. In all ages a Moody has been attended by a Sankey. History repeats itself because like causes are pretty sure to produce like effects.

It would be an interesting task to prepare a volume of notable facts connected with open air preaching, or, better still, a consecutive history of it. I have no time for even a complete outline,

but would simply ask you, where would the Reformation have been if its great preachers had confined themselves to churches and cathedrals? How would the common people have become indoctrinated with the gospel had it not been for those far wandering evangelists, the colporteurs, and those daring innovators who found a pulpit on every heap of stones, and an audience chamber in every open space near the abodes of men?

Among examples within our own highly favoured island I cannot forbear mentioning the notable case of holy Wishart. This I quote from Gillie's "Historical Collections":—

"George Wishart was one of the early preachers of the doctrines of the Reformers, and suffered martyrdom in the days of Knox. His public exposition of the Epistle to the Romans especially excited the fears and hatred of the Romish ecclesiastics, who caused him to be silenced at Dundee. He went to Ayr, and began to preach the gospel with great freedom and faithfulness. But Dunbar, the then Archbishop of Glasgow, being informed of the great concourse of people who crowded to his sermons, at the instigation of Cardinal Beaton, went to Ayr, with the resolution to apprehend him; but first took possession of the church, to prevent him from preaching in it. The news of this brought Alexander, Earl of Glencairn, and some gentlemen of the neighbourhood immediately to town. They wished and offered to put Wishart into the church, but he would not consent, saying, 'that the Bishop's sermon would not do much hurt, and that, if they pleased, he would go to the market cross,' which he accordingly did, and preached with such success, that several of his hearers, formerly enemies to the truth, were converted on the occasion.

"Wishart continued with the gentlemen of Kyle, after the archbishop's departure; and being desired to preach next Lord's-day at the church of Mauchline, he went thither with that design, but the sheriff of Ayr had, in the night time, put a garrison of soldiers into the church to keep him out. Hugh Campbell, of Kinzeanleugh, with others in the parish, were exceedingly offended at this impiety, and would have entered the church by force; but Wishart would not suffer it, saying, 'Brethren, it is the word of peace which I preach unto you; the blood of no man shall be shed for it this day: Jesus Christ is as mighty in the fields as in the church, and he himself, while he lived in the flesh, preached oftener in the desert and upon the sea side than in the temple of Jerusalem.' Upon this the people were appeased, and went with him to the edge of the moor, on the south-west of

Mauchline, where having placed himself upon a ditch-dike, he preached to a great multitude. He continued speaking for more than three hours, God working wondrously by him; insomuch that Laurence Ranken, the Laird of Shield, a very profane person, was converted by his means. About a month after the above circumstance, he was informed that the plague had broken out at Dundee, the fourth day after he had left it; and that it still continued to rage in such a manner that great numbers were swept off daily. This affected him so much, that he resolved to return to them, and accordingly took leave of his friends in the west, who were filled with sorrow at his departure. The next day, after his arrival at Dundee, he caused intimation to be made that he would preach; and for that purpose chose his station at the head of the east gate, the infected persons standing without, and those that were whole, within. His text on this occasion was Psalm cvii. 20: 'He sent his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.' By this discourse he so comforted the people, that they thought themselves happy in having such a preacher, and entreated him to remain with them while the plague continued." What a scene must this have been? Seldom has preacher had such an audience, and, I may add, seldom has audience had such a preacher. Then, to use the words of an old author, "Old time stood at the preacher's side with his scythe, saying with hoarse voice, 'Work while it is called to-day, for at night I will mow thee down.' There, too, stood grim death hard by the pulpit, with his sharp arrows, saying, 'Do thou shoot God's arrows and I will shoot mine.'" This is, indeed, a notable instance of preaching out of doors.

I wish it were in my power to give more particulars of that famous discourse by John Livingstone in the yard of the Kirk of Shotts, when not less than five hundred of his hearers found Christ, though it rained in torrents during a considerable part of the time. It remains as one of the great out-door sermons of history, unsurpassed by any within walls. Here is the gist of what we know about it:—

"It was not usual, it seems, in those times, to have any sermon on the Monday after dispensing the Lord's Supper. But God had given so much of his gracious presence, and afforded his people so much communion with himself, on the foregoing days of that solemnity, that they knew not how to part without thanksgiving and praise. There had been a vast confluence of choice Christians, with several eminent ministers, from almost all the corners of the land.

There had been many of them there together for several days before the sacrament, hearing sermons, and joining together in larger or lesser companies, in prayer, praise, and spiritual conferences. While their hearts were warm with the love of God, some expressing their desire of a sermon on the Monday, were joined by others, and in a little the desire became very general. Mr. John Livingstone, chaplain to the Countess of Wigtoun (at that time only a preacher, not an ordained minister, and about twenty-seven years of age), was with very much ado prevailed on to think of giving the sermon. He had spent the night before in prayer and conference; but when he was alone in the fields, about eight or nine in the morning, there came such a misgiving of heart upon him under a sense of unworthiness and unfitness to speak before so many aged and worthy ministers, and so many eminent and experienced Christians; that he was thinking to have stolen quite away, and was actually gone away to some distance; but when just about to lose sight of the Kirk of Shotts these words, 'Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness?' were brought into his heart with such an overcoming power, as constrained him to think it his duty to return and comply with the call to preach; which he accordingly did with good assistance for about an hour and a half on the points he had meditated from that text, Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26: 'Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.' As he was about to close, a heavy shower coming suddenly on, which made the people hastily take to their cloaks and mantles, he began to speak to the following purpose: 'If a few drops of rain from the clouds so discomposed them, how discomposed would they be, how full of horror and despair, if God should deal with them as they deserved: and thus he will deal with all the finally impenitent. That God might justly rain fire and brimstone upon them, as upon Sodom and Gomorrah, and the other cities of the plain. That the Son of God, by tabernacling in our nature, and obeying and suffering in it, is the only refuge and covert from the storm of divine wrath due to us for sin. That his merits and mediation are the alone screen from that storm, and none but penitent believers shall have the benefit of that shelter.' In these or some expressions to this purpose, and many others, he was led on for about an hour's time (after he had done with what he had premeditated)

in a strain of exhortation and warning, with great enlargement and melting of heart."

We must not forget the regular out-of-doors ministry at Paul's Cross, under the eaves of the old cathedral. This was a famous institution, and enabled the notable preachers of the times to be heard by the citizens in great numbers. Kings and princes did not disdain to sit in the gallery built upon the cathedral wall, and listen to the preacher for the day. Latimer tells us that the graveyard was in such an unhealthy condition that many died through attending the sermons; and yet there was never a lack of hearers. Now that the abomination of intra-mural burial is done away with, the like evil would not arise, and Paul's Cross might be set up again; perhaps a change to the open space might blow away some of the Popery which is gradually attaching itself to the services of the cathedral. The restoration of the system of public preaching of which Paul's Cross was the central station is greatly to be desired. I earnestly wish that some person possessed of sufficient wealth would purchase a central space in our great metropolis, erect a pulpit, and a certain number of benches, and then set it apart for the use of approved ministers of the gospel, who should there freely declare the gospel to all comers without favour or distinction. It would be of more real service to our ever-growing city than all its cathedrals, abbeys, and grand Gothic edifices. Before all open spaces are utterly swept away by the ever-swelling tide of mortar and brick, it would be a wise policy to secure Gospel Fields, or God's-acres-for-the-living, or whatever else you may please to call open spaces for free gospel preaching.

All through the Puritan times there were gatherings in all sorts of out-of-the-way places, for fear of persecutors. "We took," says Archbishop Laud, in a letter dated Fulham, June, 1632, "another conventicle of separatists in Newington Woods, in the very brake where the king's stag was to be lodged, for his hunting next morning." A hollow or gravel-pit on Hounslow Heath sometimes served as a conventicle, and there is a dell near Hitchin where John Bunyan was wont to preach in perilous times. All over Scotland the straths, and dells, and vales, and hill-sides are full of covenanting memories to this day. You will not fail to meet with rock pulpits whence the stern fathers of the Presbyterian church thundered forth their denunciations of Erastianism, and pleaded the claims of the King of kings. Cargill and Cameron and their fellows found congenial

scenes for their brave ministries mid the lone mountains' rents and ravines.

“Long ere the dawn, by devious ways,
O'er hills, through woods, o'er dreary wastes, they sought
The upland moors, where rivers, there but brooks,
Dispart to different seas: fast by such brooks,
A little glen is sometimes scoop'd, a plat
With greensward gay, and flowers that strangers seem
Amid the heathery wild, that all around
Fatigues the eye: in solitudes like these
Thy persecuted children, Scotia, foil'd
A tyrant's and a bigot's bloody law.
There, leaning on his spear
The lyart veteran heard the word of God
By Cameron thunder'd, or by Renwick pour'd
In gentle stream: then rose the song, the loud
Acclaim of praise; the wheeling plover ceased
Her plaint; the solitary place was glad,
And on the distant cairns, the watcher's ear
Caught doubtfully at times the breeze-borne note.
But years more gloomy follow'd; and no more
The assembled people dared, in face of day,
To worship God, or even at the dead
Of night, save when the wintry storm raved fierce,
And thunder-peals compell'd the men of blood
To couch within their dens; then dauntlessly
The scatter'd few would meet, in some deep dell
By rocks o'er-canopied, to hear the voice,
Their faithful pastor's voice: he by the gleam
Of sheeted lightning oped the sacred book,
And words of comfort spake: over their souls
His accents soothing came, as to her young
The heathfowl's plumes, when at the close of eve
She gathers in, mournful, her brood dispersed
By murderous sport, and o'er the remnant spreads
Fondly her wings; close nestling 'neath her breast
They cherish'd cower amid the purple blooms.”

At the risk of being prolix I feel I must add the following touching description of one of these scenes. The prose picture even excels the poet's painting.

“We entered on the administration of the holy ordinance, committing it and ourselves to the invisible protection of the Lord of hosts, in whose name we were met together. Our trust was in the arm of Jehovah, which was better than weapons of war, or the strength of the hills. The place where we convened was every way commodious, and seemed to have been formed on purpose. It was

a green and pleasant haugh, fast by the water side (the Whittader). On either hand there was a spacious brae, in the form of a half round, covered with delightful pasture, and rising with a gentle slope to a goodly height. Above us was the clear blue sky, for it was a sweet and calm Sabbath morning, promising indeed to be 'one of the days of the Son of man.' There was a solemnity in the place befitting the occasion, and elevating the whole soul to a pure and holy frame. The communion tables were spread on the green by the water, and around them the people had arranged themselves in decent order. But the far greater multitude sat on the brae face, which was crowded from top to bottom—full as pleasant a sight as ever was seen of that sort. Each day at the congregation's dismissing the ministers with their guards, and as many of of the people as could, retired to their quarters in three several country towns, where they might be provided with necessaries. The horsemen drew up in a body till the people left the place, and then marched in goodly array behind at a little distance, until all were safely lodged in their quarters. In the morning, when the people returned to the meeting, the horsemen accompanied them: all the three parties met a mile from the spot, and marched in a full body to the consecrated ground. The congregation being all fairly settled in their places, the guardsmen took their several stations, as formerly. These accidental volunteers seemed to have been the gift of Providence, and they secured the peace and quiet of the audience; for, from Saturday morning, when the work began, until Monday afternoon, we suffered not the least affront or molestation from enemies, which appeared wonderful. At first there was some apprehension, but the people sat undisturbed, and the whole was closed in as orderly a way as it had been in the time of Scotland's brightest noon. And truly the spectacle of so many grave, composed, and devout faces must have struck the adversaries with awe, and been more formidable than any outward ability of fierce looks and warlike array. We desired not the countenance of earthly kings: there was a spiritual and divine Majesty shining on the work, and sensible evidence that the great Master of assemblies was present in the midst. It was indeed the doing of the Lord, who covered us a table in the wilderness, in presence of our foes; and reared a pillar of glory between us and the enemy, like the fiery cloud of old that separated between the camp of Israel and the Egyptians—encouraging to the one, but dark and terrible to the other. Though our vows were not offered within the courts of God's house, they wanted not sincerity of heart,

which is better than the reverence of sanctuaries. Amidst the lonely mountains we remembered the words of our Lord, that true worship was not peculiar to Jerusalem or Samaria—that the beauty of holiness consisted not in consecrated buildings or material temples. We remembered the ark of the Israelites which had sojourned for years in the desert, with no dwelling place but the tabernacle of the plain. We thought of Abraham and the ancient patriarchs, who laid their victims on the rocks for an altar, and burnt sweet incense under the shade of the green tree.

“The ordinance of the Last Supper, that memorial of his dying love till his second coming, was signally countenanced and backed with power and refreshing influence from above. Blessed be God, for he hath visited and confirmed his heritage when it was weary. In that day Zion put on the beauty of Sharon and Carmel; the mountains broke forth into singing, and the desert place was made to bud and blossom as the rose. Few such days were seen in the desolate Church of Scotland; and few will ever witness the like. There was a rich effusion of the Spirit shed abroad in many hearts; their souls, filled with heavenly transports, seemed to breathe a diviner element, and to burn upwards as with the fire of a pure and holy devotion. The ministers were visibly assisted to speak home to the conscience of the hearers. It seemed as if God had touched their lips with a live coal from off his altar: for they who witnessed declared they carried themselves more like ambassadors from the court of heaven than men cast in earthly mould.

“The tables were served by some gentlemen and persons of the gravest deportment. None were admitted without tokens as usual, which were distributed on the Saturday, but only to such as were known to some of the ministers or persons of trust to be free of public scandals. All the regular forms were gone through. The communicants entered at one end and retired at the other, a way being kept clear to take their seats again on the hill-side. Mr. Welsh preached the action sermon and served the two first tables, as he was ordinarily put to do so on such occasions. The other four ministers, Mr. Blackader, Mr. Dickson, Mr. Riddell, and Mr. Rae, exhorted the rest in their turn; the table service was closed by Mr. Welsh with solemn thanksgiving, and solemn it was, and sweet and edifying to see the gravity and composure of all present, as well as of all parts of the service. The communion was peaceably concluded, all the people heartily offering up their gratitude, and singing with a joyful voice to the Rock of their salvation. It was pleasant as the night fell to hear their melody swelling in

full unison along the hill, the whole congregation joining with one accord, and praising God with the voice of psalms.

“There were two long tables and one short across the head, with seats on each side. About a hundred sat at every table. There were sixteen tables in all, so that about three thousand two hundred communicated that day.”

Perhaps the most remarkable place ever chosen for a discourse was the centre of the river Tweed, where Mr. John Welsh often preached during hard frosts, in order that he might escape from the authorities of either Scotland or England, whichever might interfere. Prize-fighters have often selected the borders of two counties for their performances, but their prudence would seem to have been anticipated by the children of light.

It is amusing also to read of Archbishop Sharp's commanding the militia to be sent to disperse the crowd who had gathered on the hill side to hear Mr. Blackader, and of his being informed that they had all gone an hour before to attend the sermon.

What the world would have been if there had not been preaching outside of walls, and beneath a more glorious roof than these rafters of fir, I am sure I cannot guess. It was a brave day for England when Whitefield began field preaching. When Wesley stood and preached a sermon on his father's grave, at Epworth, because the parish priest would not allow him admission within the (so-called) sacred edifice, Mr. Wesley writes: “I am well assured that I did far more good to my Lincolnshire parishioners by preaching three days on my father's tomb than I did by preaching three years in his pulpit.” The same might be said of all the open air preaching which followed, as compared with the regular discourses within doors. “The thought of preaching in the open air was suggested to Whitefield by a crowd of a thousand people unable to gain admission to Bermondsey church, where he preached one Sunday afternoon. He met with no encouragement when he mentioned it to some of his friends; they thought it was a ‘mad notion.’ However, it would have been carried out the next Sunday at Ironmongers’ Almshouses had not the preacher been disappointed in his congregation, which was small enough to hear him from the pulpit. He took two sermons with him, one for within and the other for without.” The idea which had thus ripened into a resolve had not long to wait before it was carried into execution. The Chancellor of the Diocese having put impediments in the way of Whitefield's preaching in the churches

of Bristol on behalf of his Orphan-house, he went to preach to the colliers at Kingswood "for the first time on a Saturday afternoon, taking his stand on Hannan Mount. He spoke on Matt. v. 1, 2, 3, to as many as came to hear; upwards of two hundred attended. His only remark in his journal is, Blessed be God that the ice is now broke, and I have now taken the field! Some may censure me. But is there not a cause? Pulpits are denied; and the poor colliers ready to perish for lack of knowledge." Now he was the owner of a pulpit that no man could take from him, and his heart rejoiced in this great gift. On the following day the journal relates, "All the church doors being now shut, and if open not able to contain half that came to hear, at three in the afternoon I went to Kingswood among the colliers. God highly favoured us in sending us a fine day, and near two thousand people were assembled on that occasion. I preached and enlarged on John iii. 3 for near an hour, and, I hope, to the comfort and edification of those that heard me." Two days afterwards he stood upon the same spot, and preached to a congregation of four or five thousand with great freedom. The bright sun overhead, and the immense throng standing around him in awful silence, formed a picture which filled him with 'holy admiration.' On a subsequent Sunday, Bassleton, a village two miles from Bristol, opened its church to him, and a numerous congregation coming together, he first read prayers in the church, and then preached in the churchyard. At four he hastened to Kingswood. Though the month was February the weather was unusually open and mild; the setting sun shone with its fullest power; the trees and hedges were crowded with hearers who wanted to see the preacher as well as to hear him. For an hour he spoke with a voice loud enough to be heard by every one, and his heart was not without joy in his own message. He writes in his journal: 'Blessed be God, The fire is kindled; may the gates of hell never be able to prevail against it!' It is important to know what were his feelings when he met those immense field congregations, whose numbers had grown from two hundred to twenty thousand, and what were the effects of his preaching upon his audience. His own words are, 'Having no righteousness of their own to renounce, the colliers were glad to hear of Jesus who was a friend to publicans, and came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance. The first discovery of their being affected was, to see the white gutters made by their tears, which plentifully fell down their black cheeks, as they came out of their coal pits. Hundreds and

hundreds of them were soon brought under deep convictions, which (as the event proved) happily ended in a sound and thorough conversion. The change was visible to all, though numbers chose to impute it to anything rather than the finger of God. As the scene was quite new, and I had just began to be an extempore preacher, it often occasioned many inward conflicts. Sometimes, when twenty thousand people were before me, I had not, in my own apprehension, a word to say, either to God or them. But I was never totally deserted, and frequently knew by happy experience what our Lord meant when he said, ‘Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.’ The open firmament above me, the prospect of the adjacent fields, with the sight of thousands and thousands, some in coaches, some on horseback, and some on the trees, and, at times, all affected and drenched in tears together, to which sometimes was added the solemnity of the approaching evening, was almost too much for, and quite overcame, me.”

Wesley writes in his journal, “Saturday, 31 [March, 1731]. In the evening I reached Bristol, and met Mr. Whitefield there. I could scarce reconcile myself at first to this strange way of preaching in the fields, of which he set me an example on Sunday; having been all my life (till very lately) so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order, that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin, if had it not been done in a church.” Such were the feelings of a man who in after life became one of the greatest open air preachers that ever lived!

I shall not tarry to describe Mr. Whitefield on our own Kennington Common among the tens of thousands, or at Moorfields early in the morning, when the lanterns twinkled like so many glowworms on a grassy bank on a summer’s night, neither will I mention the multitudes of glorious scenes with Wesley and his more renowned preachers; but a picture more like that which some of you can easily copy has taken a strong hold upon my memory; and I set it before you that you may never in times to come despise the day of small things:—

“Wesley reached Newcastle on Friday, the 28th of May. On walking out, after tea, he was surprised and shocked at the abounding wickedness. Drunkenness and swearing seemed general, and even the mouths of little children were full of curses. How he spent the Saturday we are not informed; but, on Sunday morning at seven, he and John Taylor took their stand near the pump, in Sandgate, ‘the poorest and most

contemptible part of the town,' and began to sing the Old Hundredth Psalm and tune. Three or four people came about them, to see what was the matter; these soon increased in number, and, before Wesley finished preaching, his congregation consisted of from twelve to fifteen hundred persons. When the service was ended, the people still stood gaping, with the most profound astonishment, upon which Wesley said, 'If you desire to know who I am, my name is John Wesley. At five in the evening, with God's help, I design to preach here again.'"

Glorious were those great gatherings in fields and commons which lasted throughout the long period in which Wesley and Whitefield blessed our nation. Field-preaching was the wild note of the birds singing in the trees, in testimony that the true spring-time of religion had come. Birds in cages may sing more sweetly, perhaps, but their music is not so natural, nor so sure a pledge of the coming summer. It was a blessed day when Methodists and others began to proclaim Jesus in the open air; then were the gates of hell shaken, and the captives of the devil set free by hundreds and by thousands.

Once recommenced, the fruitful agency of field-preaching was not allowed to cease. Amid jeering crowds and showers of rotten eggs and filth, the immediate followers of the two great Methodists continued to storm village after village and town after town. Very varied were their adventures, but their success was generally great. One smiles often when reading incidents in their labours. A string of packhorses is so driven as to break up a congregation, and a fire-engine is brought out and played over the throng to achieve the same purpose. Hand-bells, old kettles, marrow-bones and cleavers, trumpets, drums, and entire bands of music were engaged to drown the preachers' voices. In one case the parish bull was let loose, and in others dogs were set to fight. The preachers needed to have faces set like flints, and so indeed they had. John Furz says: "As soon as I began to preach, a man came straight forward, and presented a gun at my face; swearing that he would blow my brains out, if I spake another word. However, I continued speaking, and he continued swearing, sometimes putting the muzzle of the gun to my mouth, sometimes against my ear. While we were singing the last hymn, he got behind me, fired the gun, and burned off part of my hair." After this, my brethren, we ought never to speak of petty interruptions or annoyances. The proximity of a blunderbuss in the hands of a son of Belial is not very conducive to collected thought

and clear utterance, but the experience of Furz was probably no worse than that of John Nelson, who coolly says, "But when I was in the middle of my discourse, one at the outside of the congregation threw a stone, which cut me on the head: however, that made the people give greater attention, especially when they saw the blood run down my face; so that all was quiet till I had done, and was singing a hymn."

The life of Gideon Ouseley, by Dr. Arthur, is one of the most powerful testimonies to the value of outdoor preaching. In the early part of the present century, from 1800 to 1830, he was in full vigour, riding throughout the whole of Ireland, preaching the gospel of Jesus in every town. His pulpit was generally the back of his horse, and he himself and his coadjutors were known as the men with the black caps, from their habit of wearing skull caps. This cavalry ministry was in its time the cause of a great revival in Ireland, and gave promise of really touching Erin's deep-seated curse—the power of the priesthood, and the superstition of the people. Ouseley showed at all times much shrewdness, and a touch of common-sense humour; hence he generally preached in front of the apothecary's window because the mob would be the less liberal with their stones, or next best he chose to have the residence of a respectable Catholic in his rear, for the same reason. His sermon from the stone stairs of the market house of Enniscorthy was a fair specimen of his dexterous method of meeting an excited mob of Irishmen. I will give it you at length, that you may know how to act if ever you are placed in similar circumstances:—"He took his stand, put off his hat, assumed his black velvet cap, and, after a few moments spent in silent prayer, commenced to sing. People began to gather round him, and, during the singing of a few verses, were quiet, and apparently attentive, but soon began to be restless and noisy. He then commenced to pray, and quietness for a short time followed; but presently, as the crowd increased, it became uneasy, and even turbulent. He closed his prayer, and began to preach; but evidently his audience were not disposed to hear him. Before many sentences had been uttered, missiles began to fly—at first not of a very destructive character, being refuse—vegetables, potatoes, turnips, &c.; but before long harder materials were thrown—brickbats and stones, some of which reached him and inflicted slight wounds. He stopped, and, after a pause, cried out, 'Boys dear, what's the matter with you to-day? Won't you let an old man talk to you a little?' 'We don't want to hear a word out of your old head,' was the prompt reply from one in the crowd.

‘But I want to tell you what, I think, you would like to hear.’ ‘No, we’ll like nothing you can tell us.’ ‘How do you know? I want to tell you a story about one you all say you respect and love.’ ‘Who’s that?’ ‘The blessed Virgin.’ ‘Och, and what do *you* know about the blessed Virgin?’ ‘More than you think; and I’m sure you’ll be pleased with what I have to tell you, if you’ll only listen to me.’ ‘Come then,’ said another voice, ‘let us hear what he has to say about the Holy Mother.’ And there was a lull, and the missionary began: ‘There was once a young couple to be married, belonging to a little town called Cana. It’s away in that country where our blessed Saviour spent a great part of his life among us; and the decent people whose children were to be married thought it right to invite the blessed Virgin to the wedding feast, and her blessed Son too, and some of his disciples; and they all thought it right to come. As they sat at table, the Virgin Mother thought she saw that the wine provided for the entertainment began to run short, and she was troubled lest the decent young people should be shamed before their neighbours; and so she whispered to her blessed Son, “They have no wine.” “Don’t let that trouble you, ma’am,” said he. And in a minute or two after, she, knowing well what was in his good heart, said to one of the servants that was passing behind them, “Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.” Accordingly, by-and-by, our blessed Lord said to another of them—I suppose they had passed the word among themselves—“Fill those large water-pots with water.” (There were six of them standing in a corner of the room, and they held nearly three gallons apiece, for the people of those countries use a great deal of water every day.) And, remembering the words of the Holy Virgin, they did his bidding, and came back, and said, “Sir, they are full to the brim.” “Take some, then, to the master, at the head of the table,” he said. And they did so, and the master tasted it, and lo and behold you! it was wine, and the best of wine too. And there was plenty of it for the feast, ay, and, it may be, some left to help the young couple setting up house-keeping. And all that, you see, came of the servants taking the advice of the blessed Virgin, and doing what she bid them. Now, if she was here among us this day, she would give just the same advice to every one of us, “Whatsoever *he* saith to you, do it,” and with good reason too, for well she knows there is nothing but love in his heart to us, and nothing but wisdom comes from his lips. And now I’ll tell you some of the things he says to us. He says, “Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will strive to enter in, and shall not be able.”’

And straightway the preacher briefly, but clearly and forcibly, expounded the nature of the gate of life, its straitness, and the dread necessity for pressing into it, winding up with the Virgin's counsel, 'Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.' In like manner he explained, and pressed upon his hearers, some other of the weighty words of our divine Lord,—'Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God'; and, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me,'—enforcing his exhortation in each instance by the Virgin's counsel to the servants at Cana. 'But no,' at last he broke forth 'no; with all the love and reverence you pretend for the blessed Virgin, you won't take her advice, but will listen willingly to any drunken schoolmaster that will wheedle you into a public-house, and put mischief and wickedness into your heads.' Here he was interrupted by a voice, which seemed to be that of an old man, exclaiming, 'True for you, true for ye. If you were tellin' lies all the days of your life, it's the truth you're tellin' now.' And so the preacher got leave to finish his discourse with not a little of good effect."

The history of *Primitive Methodism* might here be incorporated bodily as part of our sketch of Field-preaching, for that wonderful mission movement owed its rise and progress to this agency. It is, however, a singular reproduction of the events which attended the earlier Methodism of eighty or ninety years before. The Wesleyans had become respectable, and it was time that the old fire should burn up among another class of men. Had Wesley been alive he would have gloried in the poor but brave preachers who risked their lives to proclaim the message of eternal love among the depraved, and he would have headed them in their crusade. As it was, other leaders came forward, and it was not long before their zeal called forth a host of fervent witnesses who could not be daunted by mobs, or squires, or clergymen; nor even chilled by the genteel brethren whose proprieties they so dreadfully shocked. Then came forth the old weapons in abundance. Agricultural produce in all stages of decomposition rewarded the zealous apostles—turnips and potatoes were a first course, and rotten eggs followed in special abundance, these last we note were frequently *goose* eggs, selected we suppose for their size. A tub of coal-tar was often in readiness, filth from the horse-ponds was added, and all this to the music of tin whistles, horns, and watchmen's rattles. Barrels of ale were provided by the advocates of "Church and king" to refresh the orthodox assailants, while both

preachers and disciples were treated with brutality such as to excite compassion even in the hearts of adversaries. All this was, happily, a violation of law, but the great unpaid winked at the transgressors, and endeavoured to bully the preacher into silence. For Christ's sake they were content to be treated as vagrants and vagabonds, and the Lord put great honour upon them. Disciples were made and the Ranters multiplied. Even till a late period these devoted brethren have been opposed with violence, but their joyful experience has led them to persevere in their singing through the streets, camp-meetings, and other irregularities: blessed irregularities by which hundreds of wanderers have been met with and led to the fold of Jesus.

I have no time further to illustrate my subject by descriptions of the work of Christmas Evans and others in Wales, or of the Haldanes in Scotland, or even of Rowland Hill and his brethren in England. If you wish to pursue the subject these names may serve as hints for discovering abundant materials; and I may add to the list "The Life of Dr. Guthrie," in which he records notable open-air assemblies at the time of the Disruption, when as yet the Free Church had no places of worship built with human hands.

I must linger a moment over Robert Flockhart of Edinburgh, who, though a lesser light, was a constant one, and a fit example to the bulk of Christ's street witnesses. Every evening, in all weathers and amid many persecutions, did this brave man continue to speak in the street for *forty-three years*. Think of that, and never be discouraged. When he was tottering to the grave the old soldier was still at his post. "Compassion to the souls of men drove me," said he, "to the streets and lanes of my native city, to plead with sinners and persuade them to come to Jesus. The love of Christ constrained me." Neither the hostility of the police, nor the insults of Papists, Unitarians, and the like could move him, he rebuked error in the plainest terms, and preached salvation by grace with all his might. So lately has he passed away that Edinburgh remembers him still. There is room for such in all our cities and towns, and need for hundreds of his noble order in this huge *nation* of London—can I call it less?

In America men like Peter Cartwright, Lorenzo Dow, Jacob Gruber, and others of a past generation, carried on a glorious warfare under the open heavens in their own original fashion; and in later times Father Taylor has given us another proof of the immeasurable power of this mode of crusade in his "Seven Years of Street Preaching in San Francisco, California." Though sorely

tempted, I shall forbear at this time from making extracts from that very remarkable work.

The camp-meeting is a sort of associated field-preaching, and has become an institution in the United States, where everything must needs be done upon a great scale. This would lead me into another subject, and therefore I shall merely give you a glimpse at that means of usefulness, and then forbear.

The following description of the earlier camp meetings in America is from the pen of the author of a "Narrative of a Mission to Nova Scotia":—"The tents are generally pitched in the form of a crescent, in the centre of which is an elevated stand for the preachers, round which, in all directions, are placed rows of planks for the people to sit upon while they hear the word. Among the trees, which spread their tops over this forest church, are hung the lamps, which burn all night, and give light to the various exercises of religion, which occupy the solemn midnight hours. It was nearly eleven o'clock at night when I first arrived on the border of the camp. I left my boat at the edge of the wood, one mile from the scene; and when I opened upon the camp ground, my curiosity was converted into astonishment, to behold the pendant lamps among the trees; the tents half-encircling a large space; four thousand people in the centre of this, listening with profound attention to the preacher, whose stentorian voice and animated manner carried the vibration of each word to a great distance through the deeply umbrageous wood, where, save the twinkling lamps of the camp, brooding darkness spread a tenfold gloom. All excited my astonishment, and forcibly brought before my view the Hebrews in the wilderness. The meetings generally begin on Monday morning, and on Friday morning following break up. The daily exercises are carried forward in the following manner: in the morning at five o'clock the horn sounds through the camp, either for preaching or for prayer; this, with similar exercises, or a little intermission, brings on the breakfast hour, eight o'clock; at ten, the horn sounds for public preaching, after which, until noon, the interval is filled up with little groups of praying persons, who scatter themselves up and down the camp, both in the tents and under the trees. After dinner the horn sounds at two o'clock; this is for preaching. I should have observed that a female or two is generally left in each tent, to prepare materials for dinner. A fire is kept burning in different parts of the camp, where water is boiled for tea, the use of ardent spirits being forbidden. After the afternoon preaching things

take nearly the same course as in the morning, only the praying groups are upon a larger scale, and more scope is given to animated exhortations and loud prayers. Some who exercise on these occasions soon lose their voices, and, at the end of a camp meeting, many of both preachers and people can only speak in a whisper. At six o'clock in the evening the horn summons to preaching, after which, though in no regulated form, all the above means continue until evening; yea, and during whatever part of the night you awake, the wilderness is vocal with praise."

Whether or not under discreet management some such gatherings could be held in our country I cannot decide, but it does strike me as worthy of consideration whether in some spacious grounds services might not be held in summer weather, say for a week at a time, by ministers who would follow each other in proclaiming the gospel beneath the trees. Sermons and prayer-meetings, addresses and hymns, might follow each other in wise succession, and perhaps thousands might be induced to gather to worship God, among whom would be scores and hundreds who never enter our regular sanctuaries. Not only must *something* be done to evangelize the millions, but *everything* must be done, and perhaps amid variety of effort the best thing would be discovered. "If by any means I may save some" must be our motto, and this must urge us onward to go forth into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in. Brethren, I speak as unto wise men, consider what I say.

LECTURE V.

Open Air Preaching—Remarks thereon.

I FEAR that in some of our less enlightened country churches there are conservative individuals who almost believe that to preach anywhere except in the chapel would be a shocking innovation, a sure token of heretical tendencies, and a mark of zeal without knowledge. Any young brother who studies his comfort among them must not suggest anything so irregular as a sermon outside the walls of their Zion. In the olden times we are told "Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets, she crieth in the chief places of concourse, in the openings of the gates"; but the wise men of orthodoxy would have wisdom gagged except beneath the roof of a licensed building. These people believe in a New Testament which says, "Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in," and yet they dislike a literal obedience to the command. Do they imagine that a special blessing results from sitting upon a particular deal board with a piece of straight-up panelling at their back—an invention of discomfort which ought long ago to have made people prefer to worship outside on the green grass? Do they suppose that grace rebounds from sounding-boards, or can be beaten out of pulpit cushions in the same fashion as the dust? Are they enamoured of the bad air, and the stifling stuffiness which in some of our meeting-houses make them almost as loathsome to the nose and to the lungs as the mass-houses of Papists with their cheap and nasty incense? To reply to these objectors is a task for which we have no heart: we prefer foemen worthy of the steel we use upon them, but these are scarcely worth a passing remark. One smiles at their prejudice, but we may yet have to weep over it, if it be allowed to stand in the way of usefulness.

No sort of defence is needed for preaching out of doors; but it would need very potent arguments to prove that a man had done his duty who has never preached beyond the walls of his

meeting-house. A defence is required rather for services within buildings than for worship outside of them. Apologies are certainly wanted for architects who pile up brick and stone into the skies when there is so much need for preaching rooms among poor sinners down below. Defence is greatly needed for forests of stone pillars, which prevent the preacher's being seen and his voice from being heard; for high-pitched Gothic roofs in which all sound is lost, and men are killed by being compelled to shout till they burst their bloodvessels; and also for the wilful creation of echoes by exposing hard, sound-refracting surfaces to satisfy the demands of art, to the total overlooking of the comfort of both audience and speaker. Surely also some decent excuse is badly wanted for those childish people who must needs waste money in placing hobgoblins and monsters on the outside of their preaching houses, and must have other ridiculous pieces of Popery stuck up both inside and outside, to deface rather than to adorn their churches and chapels: but no defence whatever is wanted for using the heavenly Father's vast audience chamber, which is in every way so well fitted for the proclamation of a gospel so free, so full, so expansive, so sublime. The usual holding of religious assemblies under cover may be excused in England, because our climate is so execrably bad; but it were well to cease from such use when the weather is fine and fixed, and space and quiet can be obtained. We are not like the people of Palestine, who can foresee their weather, and are not every hour in danger of a shower; but if we meet *sub Jove*, as the Latins say, we must expect the Jove of the hour to be *Jupiter pluvius*. We can always have a deluge if we do not wish for it, but if we fix a service out of doors for next Sunday morning, we have no guarantee that we shall not all be drenched to the skin. It is true that some notable sermons have been preached in the rain, but as a general rule the ardour of our auditors is hardly so great as to endure much damping. Besides, the cold of our winters is too intense for services out of doors all the year round, though in Scotland I have heard of sermons amid the sleet, and John Nelson writes of speaking to "a crowd too large to get into the house, though it was dark and snowed." Such things may be done now and then, but exceptions only prove the rule. It is fair also to admit that when people will come within walls, if the house be so commodious that a man could not readily make more persons hear, and if it be always full, there can be no need to go out of doors to preach to fewer than there would be indoors; for, all things considered, a comfortable seat screened from

the weather, and shut in from noise and intrusion, is helpful to a man's hearing the gospel with solemnity and quiet thought. A well ventilated, well managed building is an advantage if the crowds can be accommodated and can be induced to come; but these conditions are very rarely met, and therefore my voice is for the fields.

The great benefit of open-air preaching is that we get so many new comers to hear the gospel who otherwise would never hear it. The gospel command is, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," but it is so little obeyed that one would imagine that it ran thus, "Go into your own place of worship and preach the gospel to the few creatures who will come inside." "Go ye into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in,"—albeit it constitutes part of a parable, is worthy to be taken very literally, and in so doing its meaning will be best carried out. We ought actually to go into the streets and lanes and highways, for there are lurkers in the hedges, tramps on the highway, street-walkers, and lane-haunters, whom we shall never reach unless we pursue them into their own domains. Sportsmen must not stop at home and wait for the birds to come and be shot at, neither must fishermen throw their nets inside their boats and hope to take many fish. Traders go to the markets, they follow their customers and go out after business if it will not come to them; and so must we. Some of our brethren are prosing on and on, to empty pews and musty hassocks, while they might be conferring lasting benefit upon hundreds by quitting the old walls for awhile, and seeking living stones for Jesus. Let them come out of Rehoboth and find room at the street corner, let them leave Salem and seek the peace of neglected souls, let them dream no longer at Bethel, but make an open space to be none other than the house of God, let them come down from Mount Zion, and up from Ænon, and even away from Trinity, and St. Agnes, and St. Michael-and-All-Angels, and St. Margaret-Pattens, and St. Vedast, and St. Ethelburga, and all the rest of them, and try to find new saints among the sinners who are perishing for lack of knowledge.

I have known street preaching in London remarkably blest to persons whose character and condition would quite preclude their having been found in a place of worship. I know, for instance, a Jewish friend who, on coming from Poland, understood nothing whatever of the English language. In going about the streets on the Sunday he noticed the numerous groups listening to

earnest speakers. He had never seen such a thing in his own country, where the Russian police would be alarmed if groups were seen in conversation, and he was therefore all the more interested. As he acquired a little English he became more and more constant in his attendance upon street speakers, indeed, it was very much with the view of learning the language that he listened at the first. I am afraid that the English which he acquired was not of the very best, which judgment I form as much from what I have heard of open air oratory as from having listened to our Jewish friend himself, whose theology is better than his English. However, that "Israelite indeed" has always reason to commend the street preachers. How many other strangers and foreigners may, by the same instrumentality, have become fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God we cannot tell. Romanists also are met with in this manner more frequently than some would suppose. It is seldom prudent to publish cases of conversion among Papists, but my own observation leads me to believe that they are far more common than they were ten years ago, and the gracious work is frequently commenced by what is heard of the gospel at our street corners. Infidels, also, are constantly yielding to the word of the Lord thus brought home to them. The street evangelist, moreover, wins attention from those eccentric people whose religion can neither be described nor imagined. Such people hate the very sight of our churches and meeting houses, but will stand in a crowd to hear what is said, and are often most impressed when they affect the greatest contempt.

Besides, there are numbers of persons in great cities who have not fit clothes to worship in, according to the current idea of what clothes ought to be; and not a few whose persons as well as their garments are so filthy, so odorous, so unapproachable, that the greatest philanthropist and the most levelling democrat might desire to have a little space between himself and their lively individualities. There are others who, whatever raiment they wear, would not go into a chapel upon any consideration, for they consider it to be a sort of punishment to attend divine service. Possibly they remember the dull Sundays of their childhood and the dreary sermons they have heard when for a few times they have entered a church, but it is certain that they look upon persons who attend places of worship as getting off the punishment they ought to endure in the next world by suffering it in this world instead. The Sunday newspaper, the pipe, and the pot, have more

charms for them than all the preachments of bishops and parsons, whether of church or dissent. The open-air evangelist frequently picks up these members of the "No church" party, and in so doing he often finds some of the richest gems that will at last adorn the Redeemer's crown: jewels, which, by reason of their roughness, are apt to be unnoticed by a more fastidious class of soul-winners. Jonah in the streets of Nineveh was heard by multitudes who would never have known of his existence if he had hired a hall; John the Baptist by the Jordan awakened an interest which would never have been aroused had he kept to the synagogue; and those who went from city to city proclaiming everywhere the word of the Lord Jesus would never have turned the world upside down if they had felt it needful to confine themselves to iron rooms adorned with the orthodox announcement, "The gospel of the grace of God will (D.V.) be preached here next Lord's day evening."

I am quite sure, too, that if we could persuade our friends in the country to come out a good many times in the year and hold a service in a meadow, or in a shady grove, or on the hill side, or in a garden, or on a common, *it would be all the better for the usual hearers*. The mere novelty of the place would freshen their interest, and wake them up. The slight change of scene would have a wonderful effect upon the more somnolent. See how mechanically they move into their usual place of worship, and how mechanically they go out again. They fall into their seats as if at last they had found a resting place; they rise to sing with an amazing effort, and they drop down before you have time for a doxology at the close of the hymn because they did not notice it was coming. What logs some regular hearers are! Many of them are asleep with their eyes open. After sitting a certain number of years in the same old spot, where the pews, pulpit, galleries, and all things else are always the same, except that they get a little dirtier and dingier every week, where everybody occupies the same position for ever and for evermore, and the minister's face, voice, tone are much the same from January to December,—you get to feel the holy quiet of the scene and listen to what is going on as though it were addressed to "the dull cold ear of death." As a miller hears his wheels as though he did not hear them, or a stoker scarcely notices the clatter of his engine after enduring it for a little time; or as a dweller in London never notices the ceaseless grind of the traffic; so do many members of our congregations become insensible to the most

earnest addresses, and accept them as a matter of course. The preaching and the rest of it get to be so usual that they might as well not be at all. Hence a change of place might be useful, it might prevent monotony, shake up indifference, suggest thought, and in a thousand ways promote attention, and give new hope of doing good. A great fire which should burn some of our chapels to the ground might not be the greatest calamity which has ever occurred, if it only aroused some of those rivals of the seven sleepers of Ephesus who will never be moved so long as the old house and the old pews hold together. Besides, the fresh air and plenty of it is a grand thing for every mortal man, woman, and child. I preached in Scotland twice on a Sabbath day at Blairmore, on a little height by the side of the sea, and after discoursing with all my might to large congregations, to be counted by thousands, I did not feel one-half so much exhausted as I often am when addressing a few hundreds in some horrible black hole of Calcutta, called a chapel. I trace my freshness and freedom from lassitude at Blairmore to the fact that the windows could not be shut down by persons afraid of draughts, and that the roof was as high as the heavens are above the earth. My conviction is that a man could preach three or four times on a Sabbath out of doors with less fatigue than would be occasioned by one discourse delivered in an impure atmosphere, heated and poisoned by human breath, and carefully preserved from every refreshing infusion of natural air.

Tents are bad—unutterably bad: far worse than the worst buildings. I think a tent is the most objectionable covering for a preaching place that was ever invented. I am glad to see tents used in London, for the very worst place is better than none, and because they can easily be moved from place to place, and are not very expensive; but still, if I had my choice between having nothing at all and having a tent, I should prefer the open air by far. Under canvas the voice is deadened and the labour of speaking greatly increased. The material acts as a wet blanket to the voice, kills its resonance, and prevents its travelling. With fearful exertion, in the sweltering air generated in a tent, you will be more likely to be killed than to be heard. You must have noticed even at our own College gatherings, when we number only some two hundred, how difficult it is to hear at the end of a tent, even when the sides are open, and the air is pure. Perhaps you may on that occasion attribute this fact in some degree to a want of attentiveness and quietness on the part of that somewhat jubilant congregation, but

still even when prayer is offered, and all is hushed, I have observed a great want of travelling power in the best voice beneath a marquee.

If you are going to preach in the open air in the country, you will perhaps have *your choice of a spot wherein to preach*; if not, of course you must have what you can get, and you must in faith accept it as *the very best*. Hobson's choice of that or none makes the matter simple, and saves a deal of debate. Do not be very squeamish. If there should happen to be an available meadow hard by your chapel, select it because it will be very convenient to turn into the meeting-house should the weather prove unsuitable, or if you wish to hold a prayer-meeting or an after-meeting at the close of your address. It is well to preach before your regular services on a spot near your place of worship, so as to march the crowd right into the building before they know what they are about. Half-an-hour's out-of-door speaking and singing before your ordinary hour of assembly will often fill an empty house. At the same time, do not always adhere to near and handy spots, but choose a locality for the very opposite reason, because it is far away from any place of worship and altogether neglected. Hang up the lamps wherever there is a dark corner; the darker the more need of light. Paradise Row and Pleasant Place are generally the least paraisical and the most unpleasant: thither let your steps be turned. Let the dwellers in the valley of the shadow of death perceive that light has sprung up for them.

I have somewhere met with the recommendation always to preach with a wall behind you, but against that I respectfully enter my caveat. Have a care of what may be on the other side of the wall! One evangelist received a can of scalding water from over a wall with the kindly remark, "There's soup for Protestants!" and another was favoured with most unsavoury bespatterings from a vessel emptied from above. Gideon Ouseley began to preach in Roscommon with his back against the gable of a tobacco factory in which there was a window with a wooden door, through which goods were hoisted into the loft. Would you be surprised to learn that the window suddenly opened, and that from it descended a pailful of tobacco water, an acrid fluid most painful to the eyes? The preacher in after years knew better than to put himself in such a tempting position. Let his experience instruct you.

If I had my choice of a pitch for preaching, I should prefer to front a rising ground, or an open spot bounded at some little

distance by a wall. Of course there must be sufficient space to allow of the congregation assembling between the pulpit and the bounding object in front, but I like to see an end, and not to shout into boundless space. I do not know a prettier site for a sermon than that which I occupied in my friend Mr. Duncan's grounds at Benmore. It was a level sweep of lawn, backed by rising terraces covered with fir-trees. The people could either occupy the seats below, or drop down upon the grassy banks, as best comported with their comfort, and thus I had part of my congregation in rising galleries above me, and the rest in the area around me. My voice readily ascended, and I conceive that if the people had been seated up the hill for half-a-mile they would have been able to hear me with ease. I should suppose that Wesley's favourite spot at Gwennap Pit must be somewhat after the same order. Amphitheatres and hillsides are always favourite spots with preachers in the fields, and their advantages will be at once evident to you.

My friend Mr. Abraham once produced for me a grand cathedral in Oxfordshire. The remains of it are still called "Spurgeon's Tabernacle," and may be seen near Minster Lovell, in the form of a quadrilateral of oaks. Originally it was the *beau ideal* of a preaching place, for it was a cleared spot in the thick forest of Witchwood, and was reached by roads cut through the dense underwood. I shall never forget those "alleys green," and the verdant walls which shut them in. When you reached the inner temple it consisted of a large square, out of which the underwood and smaller trees had been cut away, while a sufficient number of young oaks had been left to rise to a considerable height, and then overshadow us with their branches. Here was a truly magnificent cathedral, with pillars and arches: a temple not made with hands, of which we might truly say,

"Father, thy hand
Hath reared these venerable columns, thou
Didst weave this verdant roof."

I have never, either at home or on the Continent, seen architecture which could rival my cathedral. "Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the wood." The blue sky was visible through our clerestory, and from the great window at the further end the sun smiled upon us toward evening. Oh, sirs, it was grand indeed, to worship thus beneath the vaulted firmament, beyond the sound of city hum, where all around ministered

to quiet fellowship with God. That spot is now cleared, and the place of our assembly has been selected at a little distance from it. It is of much the same character, only that my boundary walls of forest growth have disappeared to give place to an open expanse of ploughed fields. Only the pillars and the roof of my temple remain, but I am still glad, like the Druids, to worship among the oak trees. This year a dove had built her nest just above my head, and she continued flying to and fro to feed her young, while the sermon proceeded. Why not? Where should she be more at home than where the Lord of love and Prince of Peace was adored? It is true my arched cathedral is not waterproof, and other showers besides those of grace will descend upon the congregation, but this has its advantages, for it makes us the more grateful when the day is propitious, and the very precariousness of the weather excites a large amount of earnest prayer.

I once preached a sermon in the open air in haying time during a violent storm of rain. The text was, "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth," and surely we had the blessing as well as the inconvenience. I was sufficiently wet, and my congregation must have been drenched, but they stood it out, and I never heard that anybody was the worse in health, though, I thank God, I have heard of souls brought to Jesus under that discourse. Once in a while, and under strong excitement, such things do no one any harm, but we are not to expect miracles, nor wantonly venture upon a course of procedure which might kill the sickly and lay the foundations of disease in the strong.

I remember well preaching between Cheddar Cliffs. What a noble position! What beauty and sublimity! But there was great danger from falling pieces of stone, moved by the people who sat upon the higher portions of the cliff, and hence I would not choose the spot again. We must studiously avoid positions where serious accident might be possible. An injured head qualifies no one for enjoying the beauties of nature, or the consolations of grace. Concluding a discourse in that place, I called upon those mighty rocks to bear witness that I had preached the gospel to the people, and to be a testimony against them at the last great day, if they rejected the message. Only the other day I heard of a person to whom that appeal was made useful by the Holy Spirit.

Look well to the ground you select, that it is not swampy. I never like to see a man slip up to his knees in mire while I am preaching. Rushy places are often so smooth and green that we

select them without noting that they are apt to be muddy, and to give our hearers wet feet. Always inconvenience yourself rather than your audience: your Master would have done so. Even in the streets of London a concern for the convenience of your hearers is one of the things which conciliates a crowd more than anything.

Avoid as your worst enemy the neighbourhood of the Normandy poplar. These trees cause a perpetual hissing and rustling sound, almost like the noise of the sea. Every leaf of certain kinds of poplar is in perpetual motion, like the tongue of Talkative. The noise may not seem very loud, but it will drown the best of voices. "The sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees" is all very well, but keep clear of the noise of poplars and some other trees, or you will suffer for it. I have had painful experience of this misery. The old serpent himself seemed to hiss at me out of those unquiet boughs.

Practised preachers do not care to have the sun directly in their faces if they can help it, neither do they wish their hearers to be distressed in like manner, and therefore they take this item into consideration when arranging for a service. In London we do not see that luminary often enough to be much concerned upon this point.

Do not try to preach against the wind, for it is an idle attempt. You may hurl your voice a short distance by an amazing effort, but you cannot be well heard even by the few. I do not often advise you to consider which way the wind blows, but on this occasion I urge you to do it, or you will labour in vain. Preach so that the wind carries your voice towards the people, and does not blow it down your throat, or you will have to eat your own words. There is no telling how far a man may be heard *with the wind*. In certain atmospheres and climates, as for instance in that of Palestine, persons might be heard for several miles; and single sentences of well-known speech may in England be recognised a long way off, but I should gravely doubt a man if he asserted that he understood a new sentence beyond the distance of a mile. Whitfield is reported to have been heard a mile, and I have been myself assured that I was heard for that distance, but I am somewhat sceptical.* Half-a-mile is surely enough, even with the wind, but you must make sure of that to be heard at all.

* From "Chambers' Book of Days" we borrow the following note:—"Mrs. Oliphant, in her 'Life of the Rev. Edward Irving,' states that he had been on some occasions clearly heard at the distance of half-a-mile. It has

In the country it ought to be easy to find a fit place for preaching. One of the earliest things that a minister should do when he leaves College and settles in a country town or village is to begin open air speaking. He will generally have no difficulty as to the position; the land is before him and he may choose according to his own sweet will. The market-cross will be a good beginning, then the head of a court crowded with the poor, and next the favourite corner of the idlers of the parish. Cheap-Jack's stand will make a capital pulpit on Sunday night during the village fair, and a wagon will serve well on the green, or in a field at a little distance, during the week-day evenings of the rustic festival. A capital place for an *al fresco* discourse is the green where the old elm trees, felled long ago, are still lying in reserve as if they were meant to be seats for your congregation; so also is the burial ground of the meeting-house where "the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep." Consecrate it to the living and let the people enjoy "Meditations among the Tombs." Make no excuses, then, but get to work at once.

In London, or any other large town, it is a great thing to find a vacant spot where you can obtain a right to hold services at your pleasure. If you can discover a piece of ground which is not yet built over, and if you can obtain the use of it from the owner till he covers it, it will be a great acquisition, and worth a slight expense in fencing; for you are then king of the castle and disturbers will be trespassers. I suppose that such a spot is not often obtainable, especially by persons who have no money; but it is worth thinking about. It is a great gain when your place of worship has even a small outside space, like that at Surrey Chapel, or upon the Tabernacle steps; for here you are beyond the interference of the police or drunken men. If we have none of these, we must find street corners, triangles, quiet nooks, and wide spaces wherein to proclaim the gospel. Years ago I preached to enormous assemblies in King Edward's Road, Hackney, which was

been alleged, however, that Black John Russell, of Kilmarnock, celebrated by Burns in no gracious terms, was heard, though not perhaps intelligibly, at the distance of a full mile. It would appear that even this is not the utmost stretch of the phenomenon. A correspondent of the *Jameson's Journal*, in 1828, states that, being at the west end of Dumferline, he overheard part of a sermon then delivering at a tent at Cairneyhill by Dr. Black: he did not miss a word, 'though the distance must be something about two miles:' the preacher has, perhaps, seldom been surpassed for distinct speaking and a clear voice: 'and the wind, which was steady and moderate, came in the direction of the sound.'

then open fields, but now not a spare yard remains. On those occasions the rush was perilous to life and limb, and there seemed no limit to the throngs. Half the number would have been safer. That open space has vanished, and it is the same with fields at Brixton, where in years gone by it was delightful to see the assembled crowds listening to the word. Burdened with the rare trouble of drawing too many together, I have been compelled to abstain from these exercises in London, but not from any lessened sense of their importance. With the Tabernacle always full I have as large a congregation as I desire at home, and therefore do not preach outside except in the country; but for those ministers whose area under cover is but small, and whose congregations are thin, the open air is the remedy whether in London or in the provinces.

In raising a new interest, and in mission operations, out of door services are a main agency. Get the people to *listen* outside that they may by-and-by *worship* inside. You want no pulpit, a chair will do, or the kerb of the road. The less formality the better, and if you begin by merely talking to the two or three around you and make no pretence of sermonizing you will do well. More good may be done by personal talk to one than by a rhetorical address to fifty. Do not purposely interfere with the thoroughfare, but if the crowd should accumulate do not hasten away in sheer fright: the policeman will let you know soon enough. You are most wanted, however, where you will be in no danger of impeding passers-by, but far more likely to be in danger yourself—I refer to those central courts and blind alleys in our great cities which lie out of the route of decency, and are known to nobody but the police, and to them principally through bruises and wounds. Talk of discovering the interior of Africa, we need explorers for Fryingpan Alley and Emerald-Island Court: the Arctic regions are well nigh as accessible as Dobinson's Rents and Jack Ketch's Warren. Heroes of the cross—here is a field for you more glorious than the Cid ever beheld when with his brave right arm he smote the Paynim hosts. “Who will bring me into the strong city? Who will lead me into Edom?” Who will enable us to win these slums and dens for Jesus? Who can do it but the Lord? Soldiers of Christ who venture into these regions must expect a revival of the practices of the good old times, so far as brickbats are concerned, and I have known a flower-pot fall accidentally from an upper window in a remarkably slanting direction. Still, if we are born to be drowned we shall not be killed by flower-pots. Under such treatment it may be

refreshing to read what Christopher Hopper wrote under similar conditions more than a hundred years ago. "I did not much regard a little dirt, a few rotten eggs, the sound of a cow's horn, the noise of bells, or a few snowballs in their season; but sometimes I was saluted with blows, stones, brickbats, and bludgeons. These I did not well like: they were not pleasing to flesh and blood. I sometimes lost a little skin, and once a little blood, which was drawn from my forehead with a sharp stone. I wore a patch for a few days, and was not ashamed; I gloried in the cross. And when my small sufferings abounded for the sake of Christ, my comfort abounded much more. I never was more happy in my own soul, or blessed in my labours."

I am somewhat pleased when I occasionally hear of a brother's being locked up by the police, for it does him good, and it does the people good also. It is a fine sight to see the minister of the gospel marched off by the servant of the law! It excites sympathy for him, and the next step is sympathy for his message. Many who felt no interest in him before are eager to hear him when he is ordered to leave off, and still more so when he is taken to the station. The vilest of mankind respect a man who gets into trouble in order to do them good, and if they see unfair opposition excited they grow quite zealous in the man's defence.

I am persuaded that the more of open air preaching there is in London the better. If it should become a nuisance to some it will be a blessing to others, if properly conducted. If it be the gospel which is spoken, and if the spirit of the preacher be one of love and truth, the results cannot be doubted: the bread cast upon the waters must be found again after many days. The gospel must, however, be preached in a manner worth the hearing, for mere noise-making is an evil rather than a benefit. I know a family almost driven out of their senses by the hideous shouting of monotonous exhortations, and the howling of "Safe in the arms of Jesus" near their door every Sabbath afternoon by the year together. They are zealous Christians, and would willingly help their tormentors if they saw the slightest probability of usefulness from the violent bawling: but as they seldom see a hearer, and do not think that what is spoken would do any good if it were heard, they complain that they are compelled to lose their few hours of quiet because two good men think it their duty to perform a noisy but perfectly useless service. I once saw a man preaching with no hearer but a dog, which sat upon its tail and looked up very reverently while its master orated. There were no people at

the windows nor passing by, but the brother and his dog were at their post whether the people would hear or whether they would forbear. Once also I passed an earnest declaimer, whose hat was on the ground before him, filled with papers, and there was not even a dog for an audience, nor any one within hearing, yet did he "waste his sweetness on the desert air." I hope it relieved his own mind. Really it must be viewed as an essential part of a sermon that somebody should hear it: it cannot be a great benefit to the world to have sermons preached *in vacuo*.

As to *style in preaching out of doors*, it should certainly be very different from much of that which prevails within, and perhaps if a speaker were to acquire a style fully adapted to a street audience, he would be wise to bring it indoors with him. A great deal of sermonizing may be defined as saying nothing at extreme length; but out of doors verbosity is not admired, you must say something and have done with it and go on to say something more, or your hearers will let you know. "Now then," cries a street critic, "let us have it, old fellow." Or else the observation is made, "Now then, pitch it out! You'd better go home and learn your lesson." "Cut it short, old boy," is a very common admonition, and I wish the presenters of this advice gratis could let it be heard inside Ebenezer and Zear and some other places sacred to long-winded orations. Where these outspoken criticisms are not employed, the hearers rebuke prosiness by quietly walking away. Very unpleasant this, to find your congregation dispersing, but a very plain intimation that your ideas are also much dispersed.

In the street, a man must keep himself alive, and use many illustrations and anecdotes, and sprinkle a quaint remark here and there. To dwell long on a point will never do. Reasoning must be brief, clear, and soon done with. The discourse must not be laboured or involved, neither must the second head depend upon the first, for the audience is a changing one, and each point must be complete in itself. The chain of thought must be taken to pieces, and each link melted down and turned into bullets: you will need not so much Saladin's sabre to cut through a muslin handkerchief as Cœur de Lion's battle-axe to break a bar of iron. Come to the point at once, and come there with all your might.

Short sentences of words and short passages of thought are needed for out of doors. Long paragraphs and long arguments had better be reserved for other occasions. In quiet country crowds there is much force in an eloquent silence, now and then

interjected; it gives people time to breathe, and also to reflect. Do not, however, attempt this in a London street; you must go ahead, or someone else may run off with your congregation. In a regular field sermon pauses are very effective, and are useful in several ways, both to speaker and listeners, but to a passing company who are not inclined for anything like worship, quick, short, sharp address is most adapted.

In the streets a man must from beginning to end be intense, and for that very reason he must be condensed and concentrated in his thought and utterance. It would never do to begin by saying, "My text, dear friends, is a passage from the inspired word, containing doctrines of the utmost importance, and bringing before us in the clearest manner the most valuable practical instruction. I invite your careful attention and the exercise of your most candid judgment while we consider it under various aspects and place it in different lights, in order that we may be able to perceive its position in the analogy of the faith. In its exegesis we shall find an arena for the cultured intellect, and the refined sensibilities. As the purling brook meanders among the meads and fertilizes the pastures, so a stream of sacred truth flows through the remarkable words which now lie before us. It will be well for us to divert the crystal current to the reservoir of our meditation, that we may quaff the cup of wisdom with the lips of satisfaction." There, gentleman, is not that rather above the average of word-spinning, and is not the art very generally in vogue in these days? If you go out to the obelisk in Blackfriars Road, and talk in that fashion, you will be saluted with "Go on, old buffer," or "*Ain't he fine?* MY EYE!" A very vulgar youth will cry, "What a mouth for a tater!" and another will shout in a tone of mock solemnity, "AMEN!" If you give them chaff they will cheerfully return it into your own bosom. Good measure, pressed down and running over will they mete out to you. Shams and shows will have no mercy from a street gathering. But have something to say, look them in the face, say what you mean, put it plainly, boldly, earnestly, courteously, and they will hear you. Never speak against time or for the sake of hearing your own voice, or you will obtain some information about your personal appearance or manner of oratory which will probably be more true than pleasing. "Crikey," says one, "wouldn't he do for an undertaker! He'd make 'em weep." This was a compliment paid to a melancholy brother whose tone is peculiarly funereal. "There, old fellow," said a critic on another occasion, "you go and wet your whistle. You

must feel awfully dry after jawing away at that rate about nothing at all." This also was specially appropriate to a very heavy brother of whom we had aforetime remarked that he would make a good martyr, for there was no doubt of his burning well, he was so dry. It is sad, very sad, that such rude remarks should be made, but there is a wicked vein in some of us, which makes us take note that the vulgar observations are often very true, and "hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature." As caricature often gives you a more vivid idea of a man than a photograph would afford you, so do these rough mob critics hit off an orator to the life by their exaggerated censures. The very best speaker must be prepared to take his share of street wit, and to return it if need be; but primness, demureness, formality, sanctimonious long-windedness, and the affection of superiority, actually invite offensive pleasantries, and to a considerable extent deserve them. Chadband or Stiggins in rusty black, with plastered hair and huge choker, is as natural an object of derision as Mr. Guido Fawkes himself. A very great man in his own esteem will provoke immediate opposition, and the affectation of supernatural saintliness will have the same effect. The less you are like a parson the more likely you are to be heard; and, if you are known to be a minister, the more you show yourself to be a man the better. "What do you get for that, governor?" is sure to be asked, if you appear to be a cleric, and it will be well to tell them at once that this is extra, that you are doing overtime, and that there is to be no collection. "You'd do more good if you gave us some bread or a drop of beer, instead of them tracts," is constantly remarked, but a manly manner, and the outspoken declaration that you seek no wages but their good, will silence that stale objection.

The *action* of the street preacher should be of the very best. It should be purely natural and unconstrained. No speaker should stand up in the street in a grotesque manner, or he will weaken himself and invite attack. The street preacher should not imitate his own minister, or the crowd will spy out the imitation very speedily, if the brother is anywhere near home. Neither should he strike an attitude as little boys do who say, "My name is Norval." The stiff straight posture with the regular up and down motion of arm and hand is too commonly adopted: and I would even more condemn the wild-raving-maniac action which some are so fond of, which seems to be a cross between Whitefield

with both his arms in the air, and Saint George with both his feet violently engaged in trampling on the dragon. Some good men are grotesque by nature, and others take great pains to make themselves so. The wicked Londoners say, "What a cure!" I only wish I knew of a cure for the evil.

All mannerisms should be avoided. Just now I observe that nothing can be done without a very large Bagster's Bible with a limp cover. There seems to be some special charm about the large size, though it almost needs a little perambulator in which to push it about. With such a Bible full of ribbons, select a standing in Seven Dials, after the pattern of a divine so graphically described by Mr. McCree. Take off your hat, put your Bible in it, and place it on the ground. Let the kind friend who approaches you on the right hold your umbrella. See how eager the dear man is to do so! Is it not pleasing? He assures you he is never so happy as when he is helping good men to do good. Now close your eyes in prayer. When your devotions are over, *somebody will have profited by the occasion*. Where is your affectionate friend who held your umbrella and your hymn-book? Where is that well-brushed hat, and that orthodox Bagster? Where? oh, where? Echo answers, "Where?"

The catastrophe which I have thus described suggests that a brother had better accompany you in your earlier ministries, that one may watch while the other prays. If a number of friends will go with you and make a ring around you it will be a great acquisition, and if these can sing it will be still further helpful. The friendly company will attract others, will help to secure order, and will do good service by sounding forth sermons in song.

It will be very desirable to speak so as to be heard, but there is no use in incessant bawling. The best street preaching is not that which is done at the top of your voice, for it must be impossible to lay the proper emphasis upon telling passages when all along you are shouting with all your might. When there are no hearers near you, and yet people stand upon the other side of the road and listen, would it not be as well to cross over and so save a little of the strength which is now wasted? A quiet, penetrating, conversational style would seem to be the most telling. Men do not hawl and halloa when they are pleading in deepest earnestness; they have generally at such times less wind and a little more rain: less rant and a few more tears. On, on, on with one monotonous shout and you will weary everybody and wear out yourself. Be wise now, therefore, O ye who would

succeed in declaring your Master's message among the multitude, and use your voices as common sense would dictate.

In a tract published by that excellent society "The Open Air Mission," I notice the following

QUALIFICATIONS FOR OPEN-AIR PREACHERS.

1. A good voice.
2. Naturalness of manner.
3. Self-possession.
4. A good knowledge of Scripture and of common things.
5. Ability to adapt himself to any congregation.
6. Good illustrative powers.
7. Zeal, prudence, and common sense.
8. A large, loving heart.
9. Sincere belief in all he says.
10. Entire dependence on the Holy Spirit for success.
11. A close walk with God by prayer.
12. A consistent walk before men by a holy life.

If any man has all these qualifications, the Queen had better make a bishop of him at once, yet there is no one of these qualities which could well be dispensed with.

Interruptions are pretty sure to occur in the streets of London. At certain places all will go well for months, but in other positions the fight begins as soon as the speaker opens his mouth. There are *seasons* of opposition: different schools of adversaries rise and fall, and accordingly there is disorder or quiet. The best tact will not always avail to prevent disturbance; when men are drunk there is no reasoning with them, and of furious Irish Papists we may say much the same. Little is to be done with such unless the crowd around will co-operate, as oftentimes they will, in removing the obstructor. Certain characters, if they find that preaching is going on, will interrupt by hook or by crook. They go on purpose, and if answered once and again they still persevere. One constant rule is to be always courteous and good tempered, for if you become cross or angry it is all over with you. Another rule is to keep to your subject, and never be drawn into side issues. Preach Christ or nothing: don't dispute or discuss except with your eye on the cross. If driven off for a moment always be on the watch to get back to your sole topic. Tell them the old, old story, and if they will not hear *that*, move on. Yet be adroit, and take them with guile. Seek the one object by many roads.

A little mother-wit is often the best resource and will work wonders with a crowd. *Bonhomie* is the next best thing to grace on such occasions. A brother of my acquaintance silenced a violent Romanist by offering him his stand and requesting him to preach. The man's comrades for the very fun of the thing urged him on, but, as he declined, the dog in the manger fable was narrated and the disturber disappeared. If it be a real sceptic who is assailing you it is prudence to shun debate as much as possible, or ask him questions in return, for your business is not to argue but to proclaim the gospel. Mr. John McGregor says "Sceptics are of many kinds. Some of them ask questions to get answers, and others put difficulties to puzzle the people. An honest sceptic said to me in a crowd in Hyde-park, 'I have been trying to believe for these ten years, but there is a contradiction I cannot get over, and it is this: we are told that printing was invented not five hundred years ago, and yet that the Bible is five thousand years old, and I cannot for the life of me see how this can be.' Nay! the crowd did not laugh at this man. *Very few people in a crowd know much more than he did about the Bible.* But how deeply they drank in a half-hour's account of the Scripture manuscripts, their preservation, their translations and versions, their dispersion and collection, their collation and transmission, and the overwhelming evidence of their genuine truth!"

I remember an infidel on Kennington Common being most effectually stopped. He continued to cry up the beauties of *nature* and the works of *nature* until the preacher asked him if he would kindly tell them what nature was. He replied that "everybody knew what nature was." The preacher retorted, "Well, then, it will be all the easier for you to tell us." "Why, nature—nature," he said, "nature,—nature is nature." Of course, the crowd laughed and the wise man subsided.

Ignorance when it is allied with a coarse voluble tongue is to be met by letting it have rope enough. One fellow wanted to know "how Jacob *knew* that Esau hated him." He had hold of the wrong end of the stick that time, and the preacher did not enlighten him, or he would have set him up with ammunition for future encounters.

Our business is not to supply men with arguments by informing them of difficulties. In the process of answering them ministers have published the sentiments of infidels more widely than the infidels themselves could have done. Unbelievers only "glean their blunted shafts, and shoot them at the shield of truth again."

Our object is not to conquer them in logical encounters, but to save their souls. Real difficulties we should endeavour to meet, and hence a competent knowledge of the evidences is most desirable; but honest objectors are best conversed with alone, when they are not ashamed to own themselves in the wrong, and this we could not expect of them in the crowd. Christ is to be preached whether men will believe in him or no. Our own experience of His power to save will be our best reasoning, and earnestness our best rhetoric. The occasion will frequently suggest the fittest thing to say, and we may also fall back on the Holy Spirit who will teach us in the self-same hour what we shall speak.

The open-air speaker's calling is as honourable as it is arduous, as useful as it is laborious. God alone can sustain you in it, but with Him at your side you will have nothing to fear. If ten thousand rebels were before you and a legion of devils in every one of them you need not tremble. More is he that is for you than all they that be against you.

“By all hell's host withstood,
We all hell's host o'erthrow;
And conquering them through Jesus' blood,
We still to conquer go.”

LECTURE VI.

Posture, Action, Gesture, etc.

THE subjects of this lecture are to be "*Posture, Gesture, and Action in the Delivery of a Sermon.*" I shall not attempt to draw any hard and fast line of division between the one and the other; for it would need a very highly discriminating mind to keep them separate; indeed, it could not be done at all, for they naturally merge into each other. As I have, after a fair trial, found it impossible to keep even "posture" and "gesture" in an absolutely unmingled state in my own mind, I have allowed them to run together; but I hope that no confusion will appear in the result.

The sermon itself is the main thing: its matter, its aim, and the spirit in which it is brought before the people, the sacred anointing upon the preacher, and the divine power applying the truth to the hearer:—these are infinitely more important than any details of manner. Posture and action are comparatively small and inconsiderable matters; but still even the sandal in the statue of Minerva should be correctly carved, and in the service of God even the smallest things should be regarded with holy care. Life is made up of little incidents, and success in it often depends upon attention to minor details. Small flies make the apothecary's ointment to stink, and little foxes spoil the vines, and therefore small flies and little foxes should be kept out of our ministry. Doubtless, faults in even so secondary a matter as posture have prejudiced men's minds, and so injured the success of what would otherwise have been most acceptable ministries. A man of more than average abilities may, by ridiculous action, be thrown into the rear rank and kept there. This is a great pity, even if there were only one such case, but it is to be feared that many are injured by the same cause. Little oddities and absurdities of mode and gesture which wise men would endeavour not to notice are not overlooked by the general public; in fact, the majority of hearers fix their eyes mainly upon those very things, while those

who come to scoff observe nothing else. Persons are either disgusted or diverted by the oddities of certain preachers, or else they want an excuse for inattention, and jump at this convenient one: there can be no reason why we should help men to resist our own endeavours for their good. No minister would willingly cultivate a habit which would blunt his arrows, or drift them aside from the mark; and, therefore, since these minor matters of movement, posture, and gesture may have that effect, you will give them your immediate attention.

We very readily admit that action in preaching is an affair of minor consequence; for some who have succeeded in the highest sense have been exceedingly faulty from the rhetorician's point of view. At the present moment there is in Boston, U. S. A., a preacher of the very highest order of power, of whom a friendly critic writes: "In the opening sentences one or the other of his arms shakes at his side in a helpless fashion, as if it were made of caudal vertebræ loosely jointed. He soon exhibits a most engaging awkwardness, waddling about in a way to suggest that each leg is shorter than the other, and shaking his head and shoulders in ungainly emphasis. He raises one eyebrow in a quite impossible fashion. No one else can squint so." This is an instance of mind overcoming matter, and the excellence of the teaching condoning defects in utterance; but it would be better if no such drawbacks existed. Are not apples of gold all the more attractive for being placed in baskets of silver? Why should powerful teaching be associated with waddling and squinting? Still it is evident that proper action is, to say the least, not essential to success. Homer would appear to have considered the entire absence of gesture to be no detriment to eminent power in speech, for he pictures one of his greatest heroes as entirely abjuring it, though not without some sense of censure from his audience.

"But when Ulysses rose, in thought profound,
His modest eyes he fixed upon the ground;
As one unskilled or dumb, he seemed to stand,
Nor rais'd his head, nor stretched his sleeptried hand.
But when he speaks, what elocution flows!
Soft as the fleeces of descending snows,
The copious accents fall, with easy art;
Melting they fall, and sink into the heart!
Wondering we hear, and, fixed in deep surprise,
Our ears refute the censures of our eyes."

Nor need we go back to the ancients for proof that an exceedingly

quiet action may be connected with the highest power of eloquence, for several instances occur to us among the moderns. One may suffice: our own supremely gifted Robert Hall had no oratorical action, and scarcely any motion in the pulpit, except an occasional lifting or waving of the right hand, and in his most impassioned moments an alternate retreat and advance.

It is not so much incumbent upon you to acquire right pulpit action as it is to get rid of that which is wrong. If you could be reduced to motionless dummies, it would be better than being active and even vigorous incarnations of the grotesque, as some of our brethren have been. Some men by degrees fall into a suicidal style of preaching, and it is a very rare thing indeed to see a man escape when once he has entangled himself in the meshes of an evil mannerism. No one likes to tell them of their queer antics, and so they are unaware of them; but it is surprising that their wives do not mimic them in private and laugh them out of their awkwardness. I have heard of a brother who in his earlier days was most acceptable, but who afterwards dropped far behind in the race because he by degrees fell into bad habits: he spoke with a discordant whine, assumed most singular attitudes, and used such extraordinary mouthings that people could not hear him with pleasure. He developed into a man to be esteemed and honoured, but not to be listened to. Excellent Christian men have said that they did not know whether to laugh or to cry when they were hearing him preach: they felt as if they must laugh at the bidding of nature, and then they felt that they ought to cry from the impulse of grace when they saw so good a preacher utterly ruined by absurd affectations. If you do not care to cultivate proper action, at least be wise enough to steer clear of that which is grotesque or affected. There is a wide range between the fop, curling and perfuming his locks, and permitting one's hair to hang in matted masses like the mane of a wild beast. We should never advise you to practise postures before a glass, nor to imitate great divines, nor to ape the fine gentleman; but there is no need, on the other hand, to be vulgar or absurd. Postures and attitudes are merely a small part of the dress of a discourse, and it is not in dress that the substance of the matter lies: a man in fustian is "a man for a' that," and so a sermon which is oddly delivered may be a good sermon for all that; but still, as none of you would care to wear a pauper's suit if you could procure better raiment, so you should not be so slovenly as to clothe truth like a mendicant when you might array her as a prince's daughter.

Some men are naturally very awkward in their persons and movements. I suppose we must blame what the countryman called their "broughtens up." The rustic's gait is heavy, and his walk is slouching. You can see that his natural *habitat* is a ploughed field. On the pavement or the carpet he is suspicious of his footing, but down a muddy lane, with a mule's burden of earth on each boot, he progresses with ease, if not with elegance. There is a lumpishness and lubberliness innate in the elements of some men's constitutions. You could not make them elegant if you brayed them in a mortar among wheat with a pestle. The drill-sergeant is of the utmost use in our schools, and those parents who think that drill exercise is a waste of time are very much mistaken. There is a shape and handiness, a general propriety of form, which the human body acquires under proper drill which seldom comes in any other manner. Drill brings a man's shoulders down, keeps his arms from excessive swinging, expands the chest, shows him what to do with his hands, and, in a word, teaches a man how to walk uprightly, and to bring himself into something like ship-shape, without any conscious effort to do so, which effort would be a sure betrayal of his awkwardness. Very spiritual people will think me trifling, but indeed I am not. I hope the day will come when it will be looked upon as an essential part of education to teach a young man how to carry himself, and move without clumsiness.

It may happen that awkward gestures arise from feeble utterance, and a nervous consciousness of lack of power in that direction. Certain splendid men of our acquaintance are so modest as to be diffident, and hence they become hesitating in speech, and disarranged in manner. Perhaps no more notable instance of this can be mentioned than the late beloved Dr. James Hamilton. He was the most beautiful and chaste of speakers, with an action painful to the last degree. His biographer says:—"In mental resources and acquirements he was possessed of great wealth; but in the capacity to utter his thoughts, with all the variation of tone and key which their nature required, yet so as to be thoroughly heard in a great edifice, he was far less gifted. In this department, accordingly, he was always pained by a conscious shortcoming from his own ideal. It is certain that lack of vocal force, and ready control over his intonations, largely detracted from the power and popularity of his preaching. In delicacy of conception, in the happy choice of idioms, in the command of striking and original imagery, and in the glow of evangelical fervour that pervaded all, he had few equals. These rare qualities, however, were shorn of half their

strength, in as far as his public preaching was concerned, by the necessity under which he constantly lay of straining to make himself audible, by *standing on his tip-toes, and throwing out his words in handfuls, if so be they might reach the far-distant aisles*. If the muscles of his chest had been such as to enable him to stand solidly at ease, while his lips performed the task of articulation without the aid of auxiliary blasts from over-inflated lungs, James Hamilton would certainly have been followed by greater crowds, and obtained access for his message to a wider and more varied circle. But we do not know what counterbalancing evil might have come in along with such external success. Although with all his prayers and pains this thorn was still left in the flesh, the grand compensation remained: 'My grace is sufficient for thee; my strength is perfect in thy weakness.' What talents the Lord saw meet to bestow, he laid out with marvellous skill and diligence in the giver's service, and if some of the talents were withheld, the Withholder knows why. He hath done all things well." In this sentiment we heartily concur, but we should be sorry for any young man to submit at discretion to a similar defect, and ascribe it to the hand of the Lord. Dr. Hamilton did not so. He earnestly endeavoured to overcome his natural disadvantage, and to our knowledge took lessons of more than one professor of elocution. He did not take refuge in the sluggard's plea, but laboured hard to master the difficulty, and only failed because it was a physical defect beyond all remedy. Let us wherever we see awkwardness, which is evidently unavoidable, take little or no notice of it, and take care to commend the brother that he does so well under the circumstances; counting it no small achievement for a divine to cover by richness of thought and fitness of language the ungainliness of his outer man, thus making the soul triumph over the body. Yet should we ourselves be afflicted with any fault of manner, let us resolve to overcome it, for it is not an impossible task. Edward Irving was a striking instance of a man's power to improve himself in this respect. At first his manner was awkward, constrained, and unnatural; but by diligent culture his attitude and action were made to be striking aids to his eloquence.

Pulpits have much to answer for in having made men awkward. What horrible inventions they are! If we could once abolish them we might say concerning them as Joshua did concerning Jericho—"Cursed be he that buildeth this Jericho," for the old-fashioned pulpit has been a greater curse to the churches than is at first sight evident. No barrister would ever enter a pulpit

to plead a case at the bar. How could he hope to succeed while buried alive almost up to his shoulders? The client would be ruined if the advocate were thus imprisoned. How manly, how commanding is the attitude in which Chrysostom is usually represented! Forgetting his robes for the moment one cannot but feel that such a natural posture is far more worthy of sublime truth than that of a person crouching over a sheet of paper, looking up very occasionally, and then revealing no more than his head

and shoulders. Austin in his *Chironomia** very properly says, "Freedom is also necessary to gracefulness of action. No gestures can be graceful which are either confined by external circumstances, or restrained by the mind. If a man were obliged to address an assembly from a narrow window, through which he could not extend his arms and his head, it would be in vain for him to attempt graceful gesture. Confinement in every lesser degree must be pro-



portionally injurious to grace; thus the crowded bar is injurious to the action of the advocate, and the enclosed and bolstered pulpit, which often cuts off more than half of his figure, is equally injurious to the graceful action of the preacher."

* *Chironomia*; or, a Treatise on Rhetorical Delivery: comprehending many precepts, both ancient and modern, for the proper regulation of the Voice, the Countenance, and Gesture, and a new method for the notation thereof; illustrated by many figures. By the Reverend Gilbert Austin, A M. London. 1806. [Quarto.]

The late Thomas Binney was unable to endure a platform, and was known to fetch gowns and other materials to hang over the rails of an open rostrum, if he found himself placed in one: this must have arisen solely from the force of habit, for there can be no real advantage in being enclosed in a wooden pen. This feeling will no doubt retain the close pulpit in its place for awhile longer, but in ages to come men will find an argument for the divinity of our holy faith in the fact that it survived pulpits.

Ministers cannot be blamed for ungainly postures and attitudes when only a very small part of their bodies can be seen during a



PAUL PREACHING AT ATHENS,
AFTER RAPHAEL.

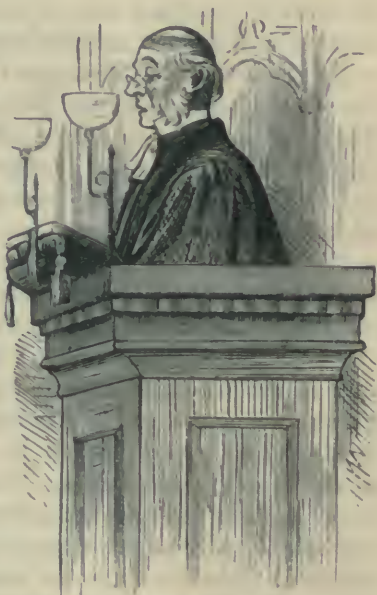
discourse. If it was the custom to preach as Paul did at Athens public speakers would become models of propriety, but when the usual method is modelled upon our woodcut of "The Reverend Dr. Paul preaching in London" we cannot marvel if the ungainly and the grotesque abound. By the way, it is interesting to note that Raphael in his representation of Paul at Athens evidently had in his mind the apostle's utterance, "God dwelleth not in temples made with hands, neither is worshipped with man's hands": hence he delineates him as lifting his hands. I am indebted for this hint to G. W. Hervey, M.A., who has written a very able and comprehensive "System of Rhetoric."*

Remarkable are the forms which pulpits have assumed according to the freaks of human fancy and folly. Twenty years ago they had probably reached their very worst. What could have been their design and intent it would be hard to conjecture. A deep wooden pulpit of the old sort might well remind a minister of his mortality, for it is nothing but a coffin set on end: but on what rational

* A System of Christian Rhetoric for the Use of Preachers and other Speakers. By George Winfred Hervey, M.A. Houlston and Sons, 1873.

ground do we bury our pastors alive? Many of these erections resemble barrels, others are of the fashion of egg cups and wine glasses; a third class were evidently modelled after corn bins upon four legs; and yet a fourth variety can only be likened to swallows' nests stuck upon the wall. Some of them are so high as to turn the heads of the occupants when they dare to peer into the awful depths below them, and they give those who look up to the elevated preacher for any length of time a crick in the neck. I have felt like a man at the mast-head while perched aloft in these "towers of the flock." These abominations are in themselves evils, and create evils.

While I am upon pulpits I will make a digression, and remark for the benefit of deacons and churchwardens that I frequently notice in pulpits a most abominable savour of gas, which evidently arises from leakage in the gas-pipes, and is very apt to make a preacher feel half intoxicated, or to sicken him. We ought to be spared this infliction. Frequently, also, a large lamp is placed close to each side of the minister's head, thus cramping all his movements and placing him between two fires. If any complaints are made of the hot-headedness of our ministers, it is readily to be accounted for, since the apparatus for the purpose is arranged with great care. Only the other night I had the privilege, when I sat down in the pulpit, to feel as if some one had smitten me on the top of my head, and as I looked up there was an enormous argand burner with a reflector placed immediately above me, in order to throw a light on my Bible: a very considerate contrivance no doubt, only the inventor had forgotten that his burners were pouring down a terrible heat upon a sensitive brain. One has no desire to experience an artificial *coup de soleil* while preaching; if we must suffer from such a calamity let it come upon us during our holidays, and let it befall us from the sun himself. No one in erecting



THE VERY REVEREND DR. PAUL
PREACHING IN LONDON.

a pulpit seems to think of the preacher as a man of like feelings and senses with other people; the seat upon which you are to rest at intervals is often a mere ledge, and the door handle runs into the small of your back, while when you stand up and would come to the front there is often a curious gutta-percha bag interposed between you and your pulpit. This gummy depository is charitably intended for the assistance of certain deaf people, who are I hope benefited; they ought to be, for every evil should have a compensating influence. You cannot bend forward without forcing this contrivance to close up, and I for my own part usually deposit my pocket-handkerchief in it, which causes the deaf people to take the ends of the tubes out of their ears and to discover that they hear me well enough without them.

No one knows the discomfort of pulpits except the man who has been in very many, and found each one worse than the last. They are generally so deep that a short person like myself can scarcely see over the top of them, and when I ask for something to stand upon they bring me a hassock. Think of a minister of the gospel poisoning himself upon a hassock while he is preaching: a Boanerges and a Blondin in one person. It is too much to expect us to keep the balance of our minds and the equilibrium of our bodies at the same time. The tippings up, and overturnings of stools and hassocks which I have had to suffer while preaching rush on my memory now, and revive the most painful sensations. Surely we ought to be saved such petty annoyances, for their evil is by no means limited by our discomfort; if it were so, it would be of no consequence; but, alas! these little things often throw the mind out of gear, disconnect our thoughts, and trouble our spirit. We ought to rise superior to such trifles, but though the spirit truly is willing the flesh is weak. It is marvellous how the mind is affected by the most trifling matters: there can be no need to perpetuate needless causes of discomfort. Sydney Smith's story shows that we have not been alone in our tribulation. "I can't bear," said he, "to be imprisoned in the true orthodox way in my pulpit, with my head just peeping above the desk. I like to look down upon my congregation—to fire into them. The common people say I am a *bould preacher*, for I like to have my arms free, and to thump the pulpit. A singular *contretemps* happened to me once, when, to effect this, I had ordered the clerk to pile up some hassocks for me to stand on. My text was, 'We are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.' I had scarcely uttered these words,

and was preparing to illustrate them, when I did so practically, and in a way I had not at all anticipated. My fabric of hassocks suddenly gave way; down I fell, and with difficulty prevented myself from being precipitated into the arms of my congregation, who, I must say, behaved very well, and recovered their gravity sooner than I could have expected."

But I must return to my subject, and I do so by repeating the belief that boxed-up pulpits are largely accountable for the ungainly postures which some of our preachers assume when they are out of their cages and are loose upon a platform. They do not know what to do with their legs and arms, and feel awkward and exposed, and hence drop into ridiculous attitudes. When a man has been accustomed to regard himself as an "animated bust" he feels as if he had become too long when he is made to appear at full length.

There can be no doubt *that many men are made awkward through fear*. It is not the man's nature, nor his pulpit, but his nervousness which makes a guy of him. To some it is a display of great courage even to stand before an audience, and to speak is an ordeal indeed: no wonder that their attitude is constrained, for they are twitching and trembling all over. Every nerve is in a state of excitement, and their whole body is tremulous with fear. Especially are they perplexed what to do with their hands, and they move them about in a restless, irregular, meaningless manner; if they could have them strapped down to their sides they might rejoice in the deliverance. One of the clergy of the Church of England, in pleading for the use of the manuscript, makes use of the remarkable argument that a nervous man by having to turn over the leaves of his discourse thus keeps his hands occupied; whereas, if he had no paper before him, he would not know what to do with them. It is an ill wind that blows no one any good, and it must be a very bad practice indeed which has not some remote and occasional advantages. For nervousness, however, there must be a more effectual treatment; the preacher should try to conquer the evil rather than look for a mode of concealing its outward manifestations. Practice is a great remedy, and faith in God is a still more potent cure. When the minister becomes accustomed to the people he stands at ease because he is at ease, he feels at home, and as to his hands or legs, or any other part of his person, he has no thought: he goes to work with all his heart, and drops into the positions most natural to an earnest man, and these are the most appropriate. Unstudied gestures, to which

you never turned your thoughts for a moment, are the very best, and the highest result of art is to banish art, and leave the man as free to be graceful as the gazelle among the mountains.

Occasional oddities of posture and gesture may arise from the difficulty of finding the next word. An American observer some years ago said, "It is interesting, sometimes, to see the different ways in which different individuals get out of the same dilemma. Mr. Calhoun is not often at a loss for a word, but occasionally one sticks in his throat, in the pronunciation, like Macbeth's '*Amen*.' In such a case he gives a petulant twitch or two at his shirt collar, and runs his bony fingers through his long grey hair, till it fairly bristles again. Webster, when bothered for a word, or snarled up in a sentence, almost invariably scratches the inner corner of his left eye carefully with the third finger of his right hand. Failing in this, he rubs his nose quite fiercely with the bent knuckle of his thumb. As a *dernier ressort*, he springs his knees apart until his legs resemble an ellipsis, then plunging his hands deep into his pockets, he throws the upper section of his body smartly forward, and the word is '*bound to come*.'" A man ought to be forgiven for what he does when he is in an agony, but it would be a great gain if he never suffered from such embarrassments, and so escaped from the consequent contortions.

Habit also frequently leads speakers into very singular movements, and to these they become so wedded that they cannot speak without them. Tugging at a button at the back of the coat, or twiddling the fingers, will be often seen, not as a part of the preacher's oratory, but as a sort of free accompaniment to it. Addison, in the *Spectator*, relates an amusing incident of this kind. "I remember, when I was a young man, and used to frequent Westminster Hall, there was a counsellor who never pleaded without a piece of packthread in his hand, which he used to twist about a thumb or a finger all the while he was speaking: the wags of those days used to call it the thread of his discourse, for he was not able to utter a word without it. One of his clients, who was more merry than wise, stole it from him one day in the midst of his pleading, but he had better have let it alone, for he lost his cause by his jest." Gentlemen who are as yet free from such little peculiarities should be upon their guard lest they should gradually yield to them; but, so long as they are mere trifles, observed only by the few, and not injurious to the preacher's efforts, no great stress needs to be laid upon them.

The posture of the minister should be natural, but his nature

must not be of a coarse type; it should be graceful, educated nature. He should avoid especially those positions which are unnatural to a speaker, because they hamper the organs of utterance, or cramp his lungs. He should use his common sense, and not make it difficult for him to speak by leaning forward over the Bible or book-board. Bending over as if you were speaking confidentially to the persons immediately below may be tolerated occasionally, but as a customary position it is as injurious as it is ungraceful. Who thinks of stooping when he speaks in the parlour? What killing work it would be to conduct a long conversation while pressing the breathing apparatus against the edge of a table! Stand upright, get a firm position, and then speak like a man. A few orators even err in the other direction, and throw their heads far back as though they were addressing the angels, or saw a handwriting upon the ceiling. This also cometh of evil, and unless the occasional sublime apostrophe requires it, is by no means to be practised. John Wesley well says, "The head ought not to be held up too high, nor clownishly thrust too forward, neither to be cast down and hang, as it were, on the breast; nor to lean always on one or the other side; but to be kept modestly and decently upright, in its natural state and position. Further, it ought neither to be kept immovable, as a statue, nor to be continually moving and throwing itself about. To avoid both extremes, it should be turned gently, as occasion is, sometimes one way, sometimes the other; and at other times remain, looking straight forward, to the middle of the auditory."

Too many men assume a slouching attitude, lolling and sprawling as if they were lounging on the parapet of a bridge and chatting with somebody down in a boat on the river. We do not go into the pulpit to slouch about, and to look free and easy, but we go there upon very solemn business, and our posture should be such as becomes our mission. A reverent and earnest spirit will not be indicated by a sluggish lounge or a careless slouch. It is said that among the Greeks even the ploughmen and herdsmen take up graceful attitudes without any idea that they are doing so. I think it is also true of the Italians, for wherever I have seen a Roman man or woman—no matter whether they are sleeping upon the Spagna steps, or sitting upon a fragment of the baths of Caracalla, or carrying a bundle on their heads, or riding a mule, they always look like studies for an artist; yet this is the last thing which ever crosses their minds. Those picturesque peasants have never taken lessons in calisthenics, nor do they trouble their

heads as to how they appear to the foreigner; pure nature, delivered from mannerism, primness, and affectation, moulds their habits into gracefulness. We should be foolish to imitate Greeks or Italians, except in their freedom from all imitation, but it were well if we could copy their unconstrained and natural action. There is no reason why a Christian should be a clown, and there are a great many reasons why a minister should not be a boor. As Rowland Hill said that he could not see why Satan should have the best tunes, so neither can I see why he should have the most graceful speakers!

Now, leaving posture, let us more distinctly notice *action* in preaching; this also is a secondary and yet an important item. Our first observation shall be, *it should never be excessive*. In this matter bodily exercise profiteth little. We cannot readily judge when action is excessive, for what would be excessive in one man may be most fitting and proper in another. Different races employ different action in speaking. Two Englishmen will talk very quietly and soberly to one another compared with a couple of Frenchmen. Notice our Gallic neighbours: they talk all over, and shrug their shoulders, and move their fingers, and gesticulate most vehemently. Very well, then, we may allow a French preacher to be more demonstrative in preaching than an Englishman, because he is so in ordinary speech. I am not sure that a French divine is so as a matter of fact, but if he were so it could be accounted for by the national habit. If you and I were to converse in the Parisian fashion we should excite ridicule, and, in the same way, if we were to become violent and vehement in the pulpit we might run the same risk; for if Addison be an authority, English orators use less gestures than those of other countries. As it is with races so is it with men: some naturally gesticulate more than others, and if it be really natural, we have little fault to find. For instance, we cannot censure John Gough's marvellous gesticulation and perambulation, for he would not have been Gough without them. I wonder how many miles he walks in the course of one of his lectures! Did we not see him climb the sides of a volcano in pursuit of a bubble? How we pitied him as we saw him ankle deep in the hot ashes! Then he was away, away at the other end of the platform at Exeter Hall, apostrophising a glass of water; but he only stopped there a moment, and anon made another rush over the corns of the temperance brethren in the front row. Now, this was right enough for John Gough; but if you, John Smith or John Brown, commence these perambulations

you will soon be likened to the wandering Jew, or to the polar bear, at the Zoological Gardens, which for ever goes backwards and forwards in its den. Martin Luther was wont to smite with his fist at such a rate that they show, at Eisenach, a board—I think a three-inch board—which he broke while hammering at a text. The truth of the legend has been doubted, for it has been asserted that those delicate hands, which could play so charmingly upon the guitar, could hardly have been treated so roughly; but if the hand be an index of its owner's character, we can well believe it, for strength and tenderness were marvellously combined in Luther. There was much delicacy and sensitiveness about Luther's mind, yet these never diminished, but rather increased, its tremendous energy. It is by no means difficult to believe that he could smash up a plank, from the style in which he struck out at the Pope; and yet we can well imagine that he would touch the strings of his guitar with a maiden's hand; even as David could play skilfully upon the harp, and yet a bow of steel was broken by his arms. John Knox is said at one time to have been so feeble that, before he entered the pulpit, you would expect to see him drop down in a fainting fit; but once before the audience he seemed as though he would "ding the pulpit in blads," which, being interpreted, means in English that he would knock it into shivers. That was evidently the style of the period when Protestants were fighting for their very existence, and the Pope and his priests and the devil and his angels were aroused to special fury: yet I do not suppose that Melancthon thought it needful to be quite so tremendous, nor did Calvin hammer and slash in a like manner. At any rate, you need not try to break three-inch boards, for there might be a nail in one of them; neither need you ding a pulpit into "blads," for you might find yourself without a pulpit if you did. Come upon consciences with a crash, and aim at breaking hard hearts by the power of the Spirit, but these require spiritual power; physical energy is not the power of God unto salvation.

It is very easy to overdo the thing so much as to make yourself appear ridiculous. Perhaps it was a keen perception of this danger which led Dr. Johnson to forbid action altogether, and to commend Dr. Watts very highly because "he did not endeavour to assist his eloquence by any gesticulations; for as no corporeal actions have any correspondence with theological truth, he did not see how they could enforce it." The great lexicographer's remark is nonsense, but if it should be thought weighty enough to reduce

a preacher to absolute inaction, it will be better than overwrought posturing. When Nathan addressed David, I suppose that he delivered his parable very quietly, and that when the time came to say, "Thou art the man," he gave the king a deeply earnest look; but younger ministers imagine that the prophet strode into the middle of the room and, setting his right foot forward, pointed his finger like a pistol between the royal eyes, and giving a loud stamp of the foot, shouted, "THOU ART THE MAN." Had it been so done it is to be feared that the royal culprit would have had his thoughts turned from himself to the insane prophet, and would have called for his guard to clear the hall. Nathan was too solemnly in earnest to be indecently violent; and as a general rule we may here note that it is the tendency of deep feeling rather to subdue the manner than to render it too energetic. He who beats the air, and bawls, and raves, and stamps, means nothing; and the more a man really means what he says the less of vulgar vehemence will there be. John Wesley in his "Directions concerning Pronunciation and Gesture" cramps the preacher too much when he says, "He must never clap his hands, nor thump the pulpit. The hands should seldom be raised higher than the eyes": but he probably had his eye upon some glaring case of extravagance. He is right, however, when he warns his preachers that "the hands should not be in perpetual motion, for this the ancients called the babbling of the hands."

Russell very wisely says: "True vehemence never degenerates into violence and vociferation. It is the force of inspiration,—not of frenzy. It is not manifested in the screaming and foaming, the stamping and the contortions, of vulgar excess. It is ever manly and noble, in its intensest excitement: it elevates,—it does not degrade. It never descends to the bawling voice, the guttural coarseness, the shrieking emphasis, the hysteric ecstasy of tone, the bullying attitude, and the clinched fist of extravagant passion."*

When your sermon seems to demand of you a little imitative action, be peculiarly watchful lest you go too far, for this you may do before you are aware of it. I have heard of a young divine who in expostulation with the unconverted, exclaimed, "Alas, you shut your eyes to the light (here he closed both

* Pulpit Elocution: comprising Remarks on the Effect of Manner in Public Discourse; the Elements of Elocution, applied to the reading of Scripture, Hymns, and Sermons; with observations on the Principles of Gesture; and a Selection of Exercises in Reading and Speaking. By William Russell, with an Introduction, by Edwards A. Park, D.D., and Rev. Edward N. Kirk. Andover [U. S. A.], 1853.

eyes); you stop your ears to the truth (here he put a finger into each ear); and you turn your backs upon salvation" (here he turned his back on the people). Do you wonder that when the people saw a man standing with his back to them and his fingers in his ears they all fell to laughing? The action might be appropriate, but it was overdone, and had better have been left undone. Violent gesture, even when commended by some, will be sure to strike others from its comic side. When Burke in the House of Commons flung down the dagger to show that Englishmen were making weapons to be used against their own countrymen, his action seems to me to have been striking and much to the purpose, and yet Sheridan said, "The gentleman has brought us the knife, where is the fork?" and Gilray wickedly caricatured him. The risks of too little action are by no means great, but you can plainly see that there are great perils in the other direction. Therefore, do not carry action too far, and if you feel that you are naturally very energetic in your delivery, repress your energies a little. Wave your hands a little less, smite the Bible somewhat more mercifully, and in general take matters rather more calmly.



BURKE.

Perhaps a man is nearest to the golden mean in action when his manner excites no remark either of praise or censure, because it is so completely of a piece with the discourse that it is not regarded as a separate item at all. That action which gains conspicuous notice is probably out of proportion, and excessive. Mr. Hall once spent an evening with Mrs. Hannah More, and his judgment upon her manners might well serve as a criticism upon the mannerisms of ministers. "Nothing striking, madam, certainly not. Her manners are too perfectly proper to be striking. Striking manners are bad manners, you know, madam. She is a perfect lady, and

studiously avoids those eccentricities which constitute striking manners."

In the second place, *action should be expressive and appropriate*. We cannot express so much by action as by language, but one may express a few things with even greater force. Indignantly to open a door and point to it is quite as emphatic as the words, "Leave the room!" To refuse the hand when another offers his own is a very marked declaration of ill-will, and will probably create a more enduring bitterness than the severest words. A request to remain silent upon a certain subject could be well conveyed by laying the finger across the lips. A shake of the head indicates disapprobation in a very marked manner. The lifted eyebrows express surprise in a forcible style; and every part of the face has its own eloquence of pleasure and of grief. What volumes can be condensed into a shrug of the shoulders, and what mournful mischief that same shrug has wrought! Since, then, gesture and posture can speak powerfully, we must take care to let them speak correctly. It will never do to imitate the famous Grecian who cried, "O heaven!" with his finger pointing to the earth; nor to describe dying weakness by thumping upon the book-board. Nervous speakers appear to fire at random with their gestures, and you may see them wringing their hands while they are dilating upon the joys of faith, or grasping the side of the pulpit convulsively when they are bidding the believer hold all earthly things with a loose hand. Even when no longer timorous, brethren do not always manage their gestures so as to make them run parallel with their words. Men may be seen denouncing with descending fist the very persons whom they are endeavouring to comfort. No brother among you would, I hope, be so stupid as to clasp his hands while saying—"the gospel is not meant to be confined to a few. Its spirit is generous and expansive. It opens its arms to men of all ranks and nations." It would be an equal solecism if you were to spread forth your arms and cry, "Brethren, concentrate your energies! Gather them up, as a commander gathers his troops to the royal standard in the day of battle." Now, put the gestures into their proper places and see how diffusion may be expressed by the opened arms, and concentration by the united hands.

Action and tone together may absolutely contradict the meaning of the words. The Abbé Mullois tells us of a malicious wag who on hearing a preacher pronounce those terrible words, "Depart, ye cursed," in the blindest manner, turned to his companion and

said, "Come here, my lad, and let me embrace you; that is what the parson has just expressed." This is a sad business, but by no means an uncommon one. What force may the language of Scripture lose through the preacher's ill-delivery! Those words which the French preacher pronounced in so ill a manner are very terrible, and I felt them to be so when a short while ago I heard them hissed forth in awful earnest, by an insane person who thought himself a prophet sent to curse myself and my congregation. "Depart, ye cursed" came forth from his lips like the mutterings of thunder, and the last word seemed to bite into the very soul, as with flaming eye and outstretched hand the fanatic flashed it upon the assembly.

Too many speakers appear to have taken lessons from Bendigo, or some other professor of the noble art of self-defence, for they hold their fists as if they were ready for a round. It is not pleasant to watch brethren preaching the gospel of peace in that pugnacious style; yet it is by no means rare to hear of an evangelist preaching a free Christ with a clinched fist. It is amusing to see them putting themselves into an attitude and saying, "Come unto me," and then, with a revolution of both fists, "and I will give you—rest." Better not suggest such ridiculous ideas, but they have been suggested more than once by men who earnestly desired above all things to make their hearers think of better things. Gentlemen, I am not at all surprised



at your laughing, but it is infinitely better that you should have a hearty laugh at these absurdities *here* than that your people should laugh at you in the future. I am giving you no imaginary sketch, but one which I have seen myself and fear I may yet see again. Those awkward hands, if once brought into subjection, become our best allies. We can talk with them almost as well as with our tongues, and make a sort of silent music with them which

will add to the charm of our words. If you have never read Sir Charles Bell on "The Hand," be sure to do so, and note well the following passage:—"We must not omit to speak of the hand as an instrument of expression. Formal dissertations have been written on this. But were we constrained to seek authorities, we might take the great painters in evidence, since by the position of the hands, in conformity with the figure, they have expressed every sentiment. Who, for example, can deny the eloquence of the hands in the Magdalens of Guido; their expression in the cartoons of Raphael, or in the last Supper, by Leonardo da Vinci? We see there expressed all that Quintilian says the hand is capable of expressing. 'For other parts of the body,' says he, 'assist the speaker, but these, I may say, speak themselves. By them we ask, we promise, we invoke, we dismiss, we threaten, we intreat, we deprecate, we express fear, joy, grief, our doubts, our assent, our penitence: we show moderation, or profusion; we mark number and time.'"

The face, and especially the eyes, will play a very important part in all appropriate action. It is very unfortunate when ministers cannot look at their people. It is singular to hear them pleading with persons whom they do not see. They are entreating them to look to Jesus upon the cross! You wonder where the sinners are. The preacher's eyes are turned upon his book, or up to the ceiling, or into empty space. It seems to me that you *must* fix your eyes upon the people when you come to exhortation. There are parts of a sermon in which the sublimity of the doctrine may call for the uplifted gaze, and there are other portions which may allow the eyes to wander as you will; but when pleading time has come, it will be inappropriate to look anywhere but to the persons addressed. Brethren who never do this at all lose a great power. When Dr. Wayland was ill, he wrote, "Whether I am to recover my former health I know not. If, however, I should be permitted to preach again, I will certainly do what is in my power to learn to preach directly to men, *looking them in their faces*, and not looking at the paper on the desk."

The man who would be perfect in posture and gesture must regulate his whole frame, for in one case a man's most suitable action will be that of his head, and in another that of his hands, and in a third that of his trunk alone. Quintilian says—"The sides should bear their part in the gesture. The motion, also, of the whole body contributes much to the effect in delivery: so much so that Cicero is of opinion that more can be done by its gesture

than even by the hands themselves. Thus he says in his work *De Oratore* :—‘There will be no affected motions of the fingers, no fall of the fingers to suit the measured cadence of the language; but he will produce gestures by the movements of his whole body and by the manly inflexion of his side.’”

I might multiply illustrations of what I mean by appropriate action, but these must suffice. Let the gesture tally with the words, and be a sort of running commentary and practical exegesis upon what you are saying. Here I must make a pause, hoping to continue the subject in my next lecture. But so conscious am I that many may think my subject so secondary as to be of no importance whatever, that I close by giving an instance of the careful manner in which great painters take heed to minute details, only drawing this inference, that if they are thus attentive to little things, much more ought we to be. Vigneuil Marville says :—“When I was at Rome I frequently saw Claude, who was then patronised by the most eminent persons in that city; I frequently met him on the banks of the Tiber, or wandering in the neighbourhood of Rome, amidst the venerable remains of antiquity. He was then an old man, yet I have seen him returning from his walk with his handkerchief filled with mosses, flowers, stones, etc., that he might consider them at home with that indefatigable attention which rendered him so exact a copier of nature. I asked him one day by what means he arrived at such an excellency of character among painters, even in Italy. ‘I spare no pains whatever, even in the minutest trifles,’ was the modest reply of this venerable genius.”

LECTURE VII.

Posture, Action, Gesture, etc.

[SECOND LECTURE.]

THIS lecture begins at thirdly. If you remember, we have said that gesture should not be excessive, and secondly that it should be appropriate: now comes the third canon, *action and gesture should never be grotesque*. This is plain enough, and I shall not enforce it except by giving specimens of the grotesque, that you may not only avoid the identical instances, but all of a similar character. In all ages absurd gestures would appear to have been very numerous, for in an old author I find a long list of oddities, some of which it is to be hoped have taken their leave of this world, while others are described in language so forcible that it probably caricatures the actual facts. This writer says: "Some hold their heads immovable, and turned to one side, as if they were made of horn; others stare with their eyes as horribly as if they intended to frighten every one; some are continually twisting their mouths and working their chins while they are speaking, as if, all the time, they were cracking nuts; some like the apostate Julian, breathe insult, and express contempt and impudence in their countenances. Others, as if they personated the fictitious heroes in tragedy, gape enormously, and extend their jaws as widely as if they were going to swallow up everybody: above all, when they bellow with fury, they scatter their foam about, and threaten with contracted brow, and eyes like Saturn. *These*, as if they were playing some game, are continually making motions with their fingers, and, by the extraordinary working of their hands, endeavour to form in the air, I may almost say, all the figures of the mathematicians: *those*, on the contrary, have hands so ponderous, and so fastened down by terror, that they could more easily move beams of timber. Many labour so with their elbows,

that it is evident, either that they had been formerly shoemakers themselves, or had lived in no other society than that of cobblers. Some are so unsteady in the motions of their bodies, that they seem to be speaking out of a cock-boat; others again are so unwieldy and uncouth in their motions, that you would think them to be sacks of tow painted to look like men. I have seen some who jumped on the platform and capered nearly in measure; men that exhibited the fuller's dance, and, as the old poet says, expressed their wit with their feet. But who in a short compass is able to enumerate all the faults of gesture, and all the absurdities of bad delivery?" This catalogue might surely content the most voracious collector for the chamber of horrors, but it does not include the half of what may be seen in our own times by anyone who is able to ramble from one assembly to another. As children seem never to have exhausted their mischievous tricks, so speakers appear never to be at the end of their singular gestures. Even the best fall into them occasionally.

The first species of grotesque action may be named *the stiff*; and this is very common. Men who exhibit this horror appear to have no bend in their bodies and to be rigid about the joints. The arms and legs are moved as if they were upon iron hinges, and were made of exceedingly hard metal. A wooden anatomical doll, such as artists use, might well represent their limbs so straight and stiff, but it would fail to show the jerks with which those limbs are thrown up and down. There is nothing round in the action of these brethren; everything is angular, sharp, mechanical. If I were to set forth what I mean by putting myself into their rectangular attitudes I might be supposed to caricature more than one exceedingly able northern divine, and having the fear of this before my eyes, and, moreover, holding these brethren in supreme respect, I dare not go into very minute particulars. Yet it is supposable that these good men are themselves aware that their legs should not be set down as if they belonged to a linen-horse, or a huge pair of tongs, and that their arms should not be absolutely rigid like pokers. Oil for the joints has been suggested, but there appears to be a want of oil in the limbs themselves, which move up and down as if they belonged to a machine rather than to a living organism. Surely any sort of physical exercise might help to cure this mischief, which in some living preachers almost amounts to a deformity. On the platform of Exeter Hall, gentlemen afflicted with unnatural stiffness not only furnish matter for the skilful caricaturist, but unfortunately call off the attention of

their auditors from their admirable speeches by their execrable action. On a certain occasion we heard five or six remarks upon the awkwardness of the doctor's posturing, and only one or two encomiums upon his excellent speech. "People should not notice such trifles," remarks our friend Philo; but people do notice such trifles whether they ought to do so or not, and therefore it is well not to display them. It is probable that the whole of this lecture will be regarded by some very excellent people as beneath their notice, and savouring of questionable humour, but that I cannot help; for although I do not set so much value upon action as Demosthenes did when he made it the first, the second, and the third point in oratory, yet it is certain that much good speech is bereft of power through the awkward deportment of the speaker; and therefore if I may in any measure redress the evil I will cheerfully bear the criticism of my more sombre brethren. I am deeply in earnest, however playful my remarks may seem to be. These follies may be best shot at by the light arrows of ridicule, and therefore I employ them, not being of the same mind as those

"Who think all virtue lies in gravity,
And smiles are symptoms of depravity."

The second form of the grotesque is not unlike the first, and may be best distinguished as *the regular and mechanical*. Men in this case move as if they were not living beings possessed of will and intellect, but as if they were automaton formed to go through prescribed movements at precise intervals. At the back of the Tabernacle a cottager has placed over his house a kind of vane, in the form of a little soldier, which lifts first one arm and then the other with rather an important air. It has made me smile many a time by irresistibly reminding me of —, who alternately jerks each arm, or if he allows one arm to lie still, chops the other up and down as persistently as if he were moved by wind or by clock-work. Up and down, up and down the hand goes, turning neither to the right nor to the left, every other movement being utterly abjured, except this one monotonous ascent and descent. It matters little how unobjectionable a movement may be in itself, it will become intolerable if it be continued without variation. Ludovicus Cresollius, of Brittany,



(1620) in his treatise upon the action and pronunciation of an orator, speaks somewhat strongly of a learned and polished Parisian preacher, who had aroused his ire by the wearisome monotony of his action. "When he turned himself to the left he spoke a few words accompanied by a moderate gesture of the hand, then bending to the right he acted the same part over again; then back again to the left, and presently to the right again: almost at an equal and measured interval of time he worked himself up to his usual gesture, and went through his one kind of movement. You could compare him only to the blindfolded Babylonian oxen going forward and turning back by the same path. I was so disgusted that I shut my eyes, but even so I could not get over the disagreeable impression of the speaker's manner."

The prevailing House of Commons' style, so far as I have seen it in public meetings, consists of an up and down movement of the back and the hand; one seems to see the M.P. bowing to Mr. Speaker and the honourable house much as a waiter will do at an eating-house when he is receiving an order for an elaborate dinner. "Yes sir," "Yes sir," "Yes sir," with a jerk between each exclamation. The amusing rhyme with its short lines brings many a parliamentary speaker before my mind's eye:—

"Mr. Tattat
You must not pat
Your arguments flat
On to the crown of another man's hat."

This is near akin to what has been accurately described as the pump-handle style. This is to be witnessed very frequently, and consists of a long series of jerkings of the arm, meant, perhaps, to increase emphasis, but really doing nothing whatever. Speakers of this sort remind us of Moore's conundrum, "Why is a pump like Lord Castlereagh?"

"Because it is a slender thing of wood,
That up and down its awkward arm doth sway,
And coolly spout, and spout, and spout away
In one weak, washy, everlasting flood."

Occasionally one meets with a saw-like action, in which the arm seems lengthened and contracted alternately. This motion is carried out to perfection when the orator leans over the rail, or over the front of the pulpit, and cuts downward at the people, like the top sawyer operating upon a piece of timber. One wonders how

many planks a man would cut in the time if he were really working upon wood instead of sawing the air. We are all grateful for converted sawyers, but we trust they will feel at liberty to leave their saws behind them.

Much the same may be said for the numerous hammer-men who are at work among us, who pound and smite at a great rate, to the ruining of Bibles and the dusting of pulpit cushions. The predecessors of these gentlemen were celebrated by Hudibras in the oft-quoted lines,—

“ And pulpit drum ecclesiastic,
Was beat with fist instead of a stick.”

Their one and only action is to hammer, hammer, hammer, without sense or reason, whether the theme be pleasing or pathetic. They



preach with demonstration and power, but evermore the manifestation is the same. We dare not say that they smite with the fist of wickedness, but certainly they do smite, and that most vigorously. They set forth the sweet influences of the Pleiades and the gentle wooings of love with blows of the fist; and they endeavour to make you feel the beauty and the tenderness of their theme by strokes from their never-ceasing hammer.

Some of them are dull enough in all conscience, and do not even hammer with a hearty good will, and then the business becomes intolerable. One likes to hear a good noise, and see a man go in for hammering vehemently, if the thing must be done at all; but the gentleman we have in our mind seldom or never warms to his work, and merely smites because it is the way of him.

“ You can hear him swing his heavy sledge,
With measured beat and slow.”

If a man *must* strike, let him do it in earnest; but there is no need for perpetual pounding. There are better ways of becoming striking preachers than by imitating the divine of whom his predecessor said that he had dashed the inwards out of one Bible and

was far gone with another. In certain old Latin MSS. sermons, with notes in the margin, the preacher is recommended to shake the crucifix, and to hammer upon the pulpit *like Satan himself!* By this means he was to collect his thoughts; but one would not give much for thoughts thus collected. Have any of our friends seen these manuscripts and fallen in love with the directions? It would seem so.

Now, the jerking, sawing, pumping, and pounding might all be endurable and even appropriate if they were blended; but the perpetual iteration of any one becomes wearisome and unmeaning. The figures of Mandarins in a tea-shop, continually nodding their heads, and the ladies in wax which revolve with uniform motions in the hair-dresser's window, are not fit models for men who have before them the earnest work of winning men to grace and virtue. You ought to be so true, so real, so deeply in earnest, that mere mechanical movements will be impossible to you, and everything about you will betoken life, energy, concentrated faculty, and intense zeal.

Another method of the grotesque may be correctly called *the laborious*. Certain brethren will never fail in their ministry from want of physical exertion: when they mount the rostrum they mean hard work, and before long they puff and blow at it as if they were labourers working by the piece. They enter upon a sermon with the resolve to storm their way through it, and carry all before them: the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence with them in another sense besides that which is intended in Scripture. "How is your new minister getting on?" said an enquiring friend to a rustic hearer. "Oh," said the man, "he's sure to get on, for he drives at sin as if he were knocking down an ox." An excellent thing to do in spirit, but not to be performed literally. When I have occasionally heard of a wild brother taking off his collar and cravat, upon a very hot day, and even of his going so far as to divest himself of his coat, I have thought that he was only putting himself into a condition which the physical-force orator might desire, for he evidently regards a sermon as a battle or a wrestling match. An Irish thunderer of my acquaintance broke a chair during a declamation against Popery, and I trembled for the table also. A distinguished actor, who became a convert and a preacher late in life, would repeatedly strike the table or floor with his staff when he grew warm in a speech. He has made me wish to close my ears when the smart raps of his cane have succeeded each other with great rapidity and growing force. What was the

peculiar use of the noise I could not tell, for we were all awake, and his voice was sufficiently powerful. One did not mind it, however, from the grand old man, for it suited the "fine frenzy" of his whole-hearted enthusiasm, but the noise was not so desirable as to be largely called for from any of us.

Laborious action is frequently a relic of the preacher's trade in former days : as an old hunter cannot quite forget the hounds, so the good man cannot shake off the habits of the shop. One brother who has been a wheelwright always preaches as if he were making wheels. If you understand the art of wheelwrighting, you can see most of the processes illustrated during one of his liveliest discourses. You can detect the engineer in another friend, the cooper in a third, and the grocer with his scales in a fourth. A brother who has been a butcher is pretty sure to show us how to knock down a bullock when he gets at all argumentative. As I have watched the discourse proceed from strength to strength, and the preacher has warmed to his work, I have thought to myself, "Here comes the pole-axe, there goes the fat ox, down falls the prize bullock." Now, these reminiscences of former occupations are never very blameworthy, and are at all times less obnoxious than the altogether inexcusable awkwardnesses of gentlemen who from their youth up have dwelt in the halls of learning. These will sometimes labour quite as much, but with far less likeness to useful occupations ; they beat the air and work hard at doing nothing. Gentlemen from the universities are frequently more hideous in their action than commonplace people ; perhaps their education may have deprived them of confidence, and made them all the more fidgety and awkward.

It has occurred to me that some speakers fancy that they are beating carpets, or chopping sticks, or mincing sausage-meat, or patting butter, or poking their fingers into people's eyes. Oh, could they see themselves as others see them, they might cease thus to perform before the public, and save their bodily exercise for other occasions. After all, I prefer the vigorous, laborious displays to the more easy and even stately airs of certain self-possessed talkers. One rubs his hands together with abounding self-satisfaction,

"Washing his hands with invisible soap
In imperceptible water,"

and meanwhile utters the veriest platitudes with the air of a man who is outdoing Robert Hall or Chalmers. Another pauses and looks round with a dignified air, as if he had communicated inestimable

information to a highly favoured body of individuals who might reasonably be expected to rise in a state of intense excitement and express their overwhelming sense of obligation. Nothing has been said beyond the merest schoolboy talk; but the air of dignity, the attitude of authority, the very tone of the man, all show how thoroughly satisfied he is. This is not laborious preaching, but it occurs to me to mention it because it is the very reverse, and is so much more to be condemned. A few simpletons are, no doubt, imposed upon, and fancy that a man must be saying something great when he delivers himself in a pompous manner; but sensible persons are at first amused and afterwards disgusted with the big manner, "*à la grand seigneur*." One of the great advantages of our College training is the certainty that an inflated mannerism is sure to be abated by the amiable eagerness with which all our students delight in rescuing a brother from this peril. Many wind-bags have collapsed in this room beneath your tender handling, never, I hope, to be puffed out to their former dimensions. There are some in the ministry of all the churches who would be marvellously benefited by a little of the very candid if not savage criticisms which have been endured by budding orators at your hands. I would that every minister who has missed such an instructive martyrdom could find a friend sufficiently honest to point out to him any oddities of manner into which he may insensibly have fallen.

But here we must not overlook another laborious orator who is in our mind's eye. We will name him the perpetual motion preacher, who is all action, and lifts his finger, or waves his hand, or strikes his palm at every word. He is never at rest for a moment. So eager is he to be emphatic that he effectually defeats his object, for where every word is emphasized by a gesture nothing whatever is emphatic. This brother takes off men's minds from his words to his movements: the eye actually carries the thoughts away from the ear, and so a second time the preacher's end is missed. This continual motion greatly agitates some hearers, and gives them the fidgets, and no wonder, for who can endure to see such incessant patting, and pointing, and waving? In action, as well as everything else, "let your moderation be known unto all men."

Thus I have mentioned three species of the grotesque—the stiff, the mechanical, and the laborious—and I have also glanced at the lazily dignified. I will close the list by mentioning two others. There is *the martial*, which also sufficiently borders on the

grotesque to be placed in this category. Some preachers appear to be fighting the good fight of faith every time they stand before a congregation. They put themselves into a fencing attitude, and either stand on guard against an imaginary foe, or else assault the unseen adversary with stern determination. They could not look more fierce if they were at the head of a regiment of cavalry, nor seem more satisfied at the end of each division of discourse if they had fought a series of Waterloos. They turn their heads on one side with a triumphant air, as if about to say—"I have routed that enemy, and we shall hear no more of *him*."

The last singularity of action which I shall place under this head is the *ill-timed*. In this case the hands do not keep time with the lips. The good brother is a little behindhand with his action, and therefore the whole operation is out of order. You cannot at first make the man out at all: he appears to chop and thump without rhyme or reason, but at last you perceive that his present action is quite appropriate to what he said a few seconds before. The effect is strange to the last degree. It puzzles those who do not possess the key to it, and when fully understood it loses none of its oddness.

Besides these oddities, there is a class of action which must, to use the mildest term, be described as altogether *ugly*. For these a platform is "generally necessary," for a man cannot make himself so thoroughly ridiculous when concealed in a pulpit. To grasp a rail, and to drop down lower and lower till you almost touch the ground is supremely absurd. It may be a proper position as a prelude to an agile gymnastic feat, but as an accompaniment to eloquence it is



monstrous; yet have I seen it more than once. I have found it difficult to convey to my artist the extraordinary position, but the woodblock may help to show what is meant, and also to render the attitude obsolete. One or two brethren have disported themselves upon my platform in this queer manner, and they are quite welcome to do the same again, if upon seeing themselves thus

roughly sketched they consider the posture to be commanding and impressive. It would be far better for such remarkable performers if it were reported of them as of that great Wesleyan, Richard Watson: "He stood perfectly erect, and nearly all the action that he used was a slight motion of the right hand, with occasionally a significant shake of the head."

The habit of shrugging the shoulders has been allowed to tyrannise over some preachers. A number of men are round-shouldered by nature, and many more seem determined to appear so, for when they have anything weighty to deliver they back themselves up by elevating their backs. An excellent preacher at Bristol, lately deceased, would hunch first one shoulder and then another as his great thoughts struggled forth, and when they obtained utterance he looked like a hunchback till the effort was

over. What a pity that such a habit had become inveterate! How desirable to avoid its formation! Quintilian says: "Some people raise up their shoulders in speaking, but this is a fault in gesture. Demosthenes, in order to cure himself of it, used to stand in a narrow pulpit, and practise speaking with a spear hanging over his shoulder, in such a manner that if in the heat of delivery he failed to avoid this fault, he would be corrected by hurting himself against the point." This is a sharp remedy, but the gain would be worth an occasional wound if men who distort the human form could thus be cured of the fault.



At a public meeting upon one occasion a gentleman who appeared to be very much at home and to speak with a great deal of familiar superiority, placed his hands behind him under his coat tails, and thus produced a very singular figure, especially to those who took a side view from the platform. As the speaker became more animated, he moved his tails with greater frequency, reminding the observer of a water-wagtail. It must be seen to be appreciated, but one exhibition will be

enough to convince any sensible man that however graceful a dress coat may be, it by no means ministers to the solemnity of the occasion to see the tails of that garment projecting from the orator's rear. You may also have seen at meetings the gentleman who places his hands on his hips, and either looks as if he defied all the world, or as if he endured considerable pain. This position savours of Billingsgate and its fish-women far more than of sacred eloquence. The



arms "*a kimbo*," I think they call it, and the very sound of the word suggests the ridiculous rather than the sublime. We may drop into it for the moment rightly enough, but to deliver a speech in that posture is preposterous. It is even worse to stand with your hands in your trousers like the people one sees at French railway stations, who probably thrust their hands into their pockets because there is nothing else there, and nature abhors a vacuum. For a finger in the waistcoat pocket for a moment no one will be blamed, but to thrust the hands into the trousers

is outrageous. An utter contempt for audience and subject must have been felt before a man could come to this. Gentlemen, because you are gentlemen, you will never need to be warned of this practice, for you will not descend to it. Once in a while before a superfinely genteel and affected audience a man may be tempted to shock their foolish gentility by a freedom and easiness which is meant to be the protest of a brusque manliness; but to see a man preach the gospel with his hands in his pockets does not remind you of either a prophet or an apostle. There are brethren who do this ever and anon who can afford to do it from their general force of character: these are the very men who should do nothing of the kind, because their example is powerful, and they are somewhat responsible for the weaklings who copy them.

Another unseemly style is nearly allied to the last, though it is not quite so objectionable. It may be seen at public dinners of the common order, where white waistcoats need a little extra display,

and at gatherings of artizans where an employer has given his men a treat, and is responding to the toast of "the firm." Occasionally it is exhibited at religious meetings, where the speaker is a man of local importance, and feels that he is monarch of all he surveys. In this case the thumbs are inserted in the arm-holes of the waistcoat, and the speaker throws back his coat and reveals the lower part of the vest. I have called this the *penguin style*, and I am unable to find a better



comparison. For a footman or a coachman at a *soirée*, or for a member of the United Order of Queer Fellows, this attitude may be suitable and dignified, and a venerable sire at a family gathering may talk to his boys and girls in that position; but for a public speaker, and much more for a minister, as a general habit, it is as much out of character as a posture can be.

First cousin to this fashion is that of holding on to the coat near the collar, as if the speaker considered it necessary to hold himself well in hand. Some grasp firmly, and then run the hands up and down as if they meant to double the coat in a new place, or to lengthen the collar. They appear to hang upon their coat-fronts like a man clutching at two ropes: one wonders the garment does not split at the back of the neck. This practice adds nothing to the force or perspicuity of a speaker's style, and its probable signification is, "I am quite at ease, and greatly enjoy hearing my own voice."

As it would be well to stamp out as many uglinesses as possible, I shall mention even those which are somewhat rare. I remember an able minister who was accustomed to look into the palm of his left hand while with his right he appeared to pick out his ideas therefrom. Divisions, illustrations, and telling points all seemed to be growing in his palm like so many flowers; and these he seemed carefully to take up by the roots one by one and exhibit to the

people. It mattered little, for his thought was of a high order of excellence, but yet the action was by no means graceful.

A preacher of no mean order was wont to lift his fist to his brow and to tap his forehead gently, as if he must needs knock at the mind's door to wake up his thoughts: this also was more peculiar than forcible.

To point into the left hand with the first finger of the right as if boring small holes into it, or to use the aforesaid pointed finger as if you were stabbing the air, is another freak of action which has its amusing side.

Passing the hand over the brow when the thought is deep, and the exact word is not easy to find, is a very natural motion, but scratching the head is by no means equally advisable, though perhaps quite as natural. I have seen this last piece of action carried to considerable lengths, but I was never enamoured of it.

I cannot avoid mentioning an accidental grotesqueness which is exceedingly common. Some brethren always lay down the law with an outspread hand, which they continue to move up and down with the rhythm of every sentence. Now this action is excellent in its way if not carried on too monotonously, but unfortunately it is liable to accidents. If the earnest orator continues to lift his hand upward and downward he is in great danger of frequently presenting the aspect which my artist has depicted. The action verges upon the symbolic, but unhappily the symbol has been somewhat vulgarized, and has been described as "putting the thumb of scorn to the nose of contempt." Some men unwittingly perpetrate this a score times during a discourse.



You have laughed at these portraits which I have drawn for your edification—take care that no one has to laugh at you because you fall into these or similar absurdities of action.

I must confess, however, that I do not think so badly of any of these, or all of them put together, as I do of *the superfine*

style, which is utterly despicable and abominable. It is worse than the commonly vulgar, for it is the very essence of vulgarity, flavoured with affectations and airs of gentility. Rowland Hill sketched the thing which I condemn in his portrait of Mr. Taplash; of course it was a more correct representation as to detail fifty years ago than it is now, but in the main features it is still sufficiently accurate: "The orator, when he first made his appearance, would be primmed and dressed up in the most finished style; not a hair would be found out of place on his empty pate, on which the barber had been exercising his occupation all the Sunday morning, and powdered till as white as the driven snow. Thus elegantly decorated, and smelling like a civet-cat, through an abundance of perfumery, he would scent the air as he passed. Then, with a most conceited skip, he would step into the pulpit, as though stepping out of a band-box; and here he had not only to display his elegant production, but his elegant self also: his delicate white hand, exhibiting his diamond ring, while his richly-scented white handkerchief was unfurled, and managed with remarkable dexterity and art. His smelling-bottle was next occasionally presented to his nose, giving different opportunities to display his sparkling ring. Thus having adjusted the *important* business of the handkerchief and the smelling-bottle, he had next to take out his glass, that he might reconnoitre the fair part of his auditory, with whom he might have been gallanting and entertaining them with his cheap talk the day before: and these, as soon as he could catch their eye, he would favour with a simpering look, and a graceful nod."

This is a pungent prose version of Cowper's review of certain "messengers of grace" who "relapsed into themselves" when the sermon was ended: very little selves they must have been.

"Forth comes the pocket mirror. First we stroke
 An eyebrow; next compose a straggling lock;
 Then with an air, most gracefully performed,
 Fall back into our seat, extend an arm
 And lay it at its ease with gentle care,
 With handkerchief in hand depending low.
 The better hand more busy gives the nose
 Its bergamot, or aids the indebted eye,
 With opera glass, to watch the moving scene,
 And recognize the slow retiring fair.—
 Now this is fulsome, and offends me more
 Than in a churchman slovenly neglect
 And rustic coarseness would."

"Rustic coarseness" is quite refreshing after one has been wearied with inane primness. Well did Cicero exhort orators to adopt their gestures rather from the camp or the wrestling ring than from the dancers with their effeminate niceties. Manliness must never be sacrificed to elegance. Our working classes will never be brought even to consider the truth of Christianity by teachers who are starched and fine. The British artizan admires manliness, and prefers to lend his ear to one who speaks in a hearty and natural style: indeed, working men of all nations are more likely to be struck by a brave negligence than by a foppish attention to personal appearances. The story told by the Abbé Mullois is, we suspect, only one of a numerous class.* "A converted Parisian operative, a man of a wilful but frank disposition, full of energy and spirit, who had often spoken with great success at the clubs composed of men of his own class, was asked by the preacher who had led him to God, to inform him by what instrumentality he, who had once been so far estranged from religion, had eventually been restored to the faith. "Your doing so," said his interrogator, "may be useful to me in my efforts to reclaim others."

"I would rather not," replied he, "for I must candidly tell you that you do not figure very conspicuously in the case."

"No matter," said the other, "it will not be the first time that I have heard the same remark."

"Well, if you must hear it, I can tell you in a few words how it took place. A good woman had pestered me to read your little book—pardon the expression, I used to speak in that style in those days. On reading a few pages, I was so impressed that I felt a strong desire to see you.

"I was told that you preached in a certain church, and I went to hear you. Your sermon had some further effect upon me; but, to speak frankly, very little; comparatively, indeed, none at all. What did much more for me was your open, and simple, and good-natured manner, and, above all, your ill-combed hair; *for I have always detested those priests whose heads remind one of a hairdresser's assistant*; and I said to myself, 'That man forgets himself on our behalf, we ought, therefore, to do something for his sake.' Thereupon I determined to pay you a visit, and you *bagged me*. Such was the beginning and end of the affair."

There are silly young ladies who are in raptures with a dear

* M. L'Abbé Isidore Mullois, in his work, "The Clergy and the Pulpit in their Relations to the People."

young man whose main thought is his precious person; these, it is to be hoped, are becoming fewer every day: but as for sensible men, and especially the sturdy workmen of our great cities, they utterly abhor foppery in a minister. Wherever you see affectation you find at once a barrier between that man and the common-sense multitude. Few ears are delighted with the voices of peacocks.

It is a pity that we cannot persuade all ministers to be *men*, for it is hard to see how otherwise they will be truly men of God. It is equally to be deplored that we cannot induce preachers to speak and gesticulate like other sensible persons, for it is impossible that they should grasp the masses till they do. All foreign matters of attitude, tone, or dress are barricades between us and the people: we must talk like men if we would win men. The late revival of millinery in the Anglican Church is for this reason, as well as for far graver ones, a step in the wrong direction. A hundred years ago the dressiness of the clergy was about as conspicuous as it is now, but it had no doctrinal meaning, and was mere foppery, if Lloyd is to be believed in his "Metrical Plea for Curates."

He abuses rectors very heartily, and among the rest describes a canonical beau:—

"Behold Nugoso! wriggling, shuffling on,
A mere church-puppet, an automaton
In orders: note its tripping, mincing pace,
Religion creams and mantles in its face!
It's all religion from the top to toe!
But milliners and barbers made it so.
It wears religion in the modish way,
It brushes, starches, combs it every day:
Its orthodoxy lies in outward things,
In beavers, cassocks, gowns, bands, gloves, and rings:
It shows its learning by its doctor's hood,
And proves its goodness,—'cause its clothes are good."

This fondness for comely array led to a stiff propriety in the pulpit: they called it "dignity," and prided themselves upon it. Propriety and decorum were their chief concern, and these were mingled with pomposity or foolish simpering according to the creature's peculiarities, until honest men grew weary of their hollow performances and turned away from such stilted ministrations. The preachers were too much concerned to be proper to have any concern to be useful. The gestures which would have made their words a little more intelligible they would not condescend to use,

for what cared they for the vulgar? If persons of taste were satisfied, they had all the reward they desired, and meanwhile the multitudes were perishing for lack of knowledge. God save us from fine deportment and genteel propriety if these are to keep the masses in alienation from the public worship of God.

In our own day this sickening affectation is, we hope, far more rare, but it still survives. We had the honour of knowing a minister who could not preach without his black kid gloves, and when he upon one occasion found himself in a certain pulpit without them, he came down into the vestry for them. Unfortunately one of the deacons had carried into his pew, not his own hat, as he intended, but the preacher's, and while this discovery was being made, the divine was in terrible trepidation, exclaiming, "I never do preach without gloves. I cannot do it. I cannot go into the pulpit till you find them." I wish he never had found them, for he was more fitted to stand behind a draper's counter than to occupy the sacred desk. Slovenliness of any sort is to be avoided in a minister, but manliness more often falls into this fault than into the other effeminate vice; therefore shun most heartily this worst error. Cowper says,

"In my soul I loathe all affectation,"

and so does every sensible man. All tricks and stage effects are unbearable when the message of the Lord is to be delivered. Better a ragged dress and rugged speech, with artless, honest manner, than clerical foppery. Better far to violate every canon of gracefulness than to be a mere performer, a consummate actor, a player upon a religious stage. The caricaturist of twenty years ago favoured me with the name of *Brimstone*, and placed side by side with me a simpering elocutionist whom he named *Treacle*. I was thoroughly satisfied with my lot, but I could not have said as much if I had been represented by the companion portrait. Molasses and other sugary matters are sickening to me. Jack-a-dandy in the pulpit makes me feel as Jehu did when he saw Jezebel's decorated head and painted face, and cried in indignation, "Fling her down."

It would greatly trouble me if any of my remarks upon grotesque action should lead even one of you to commence posturing and performing; this would be to fly from bad to worse. We mentioned that Dr. Hamilton took lessons from a master, in order to escape from his infirmity, but the result was manifestly not very encouraging, and I gravely fear that more faults are created than

cured by professional teachers : perhaps the same result may follow from my own amateur attempt, but I would at least prevent that misfortune as far as possible by earnest warnings. Do not think of how you will gesticulate when you preach, but learn the art of doing the right thing without giving it any thought at all.

Our last rule is one which sums up all the others ; *be natural in your action*. Shun the very appearance of studied gesture. Art is cold, only nature is warm ; let grace keep you clear of all seeming, and in every action, and in every place, be truthful, even if you should be considered rough and uncultivated. Your mannerism must always be your own, it must never be a polished lie, and what is the aping of gentility, the simulation of passion,



BRIMSTONE

AND

TREACLE.

the feigning of emotion, or the mimicry of another man's mode of delivery but a practical lie.

"Therefore, avaunt all attitude and stare,
And start theatric, practised at the glass !"

Our object is to remove the excrescences of uncouth nature, not to produce artificiality and affectation ; we would prune the tree and by no means clip it into a set form. We would have our students think of action while they are with us at college, that they may never have need to think of it in after days. The matter is too inconsiderable to be made a part of your weekly study when you get into the actual battle of ministerial life ; you must attend to

the subject now, and have done with it. You are not sent of God to court smiles but to win souls; your teacher is not the dancing-master, but the Holy Spirit, and your pulpit manner is only worth a moment's thought because it may hinder your success by causing people to make remarks about the preacher when you want all their thoughts for the subject. If the best action had this effect I would urge you to forswear it, and if the worst gestures would prevent such a result I would advise you to practise them. All that I aim at is to advocate quiet, graceful, natural movements, because they are the least likely to be observed. The whole business of delivery should be *one*; everything should harmonize; the thought, the spirit, the language, the tone, and the action should be all of a piece, and the whole should be, not for the winning of honour to ourselves, but for the glory of God and the good of men; if it be so there is no fear of your violating the rule as to being natural, for it will not occur to you to be otherwise. Yet have I one fear, and it is this: you may fall into a foolish imitation of some admired minister, and this will to some extent put you off from the right track. Each man's action should suit himself and grow out of his own personality. The style of Dr. Goliath, who is six feet high, will not fit the stature and person of our friend Short who is a Zaccheus among preachers; neither will the respectable mannerism of an aged and honoured divine at all befit the youthful Apollos who is barely out of his teens. I have heard that for a season quite a number of young Congregational ministers imitated the pastor of the Weigh House, and so there were little Binneys everywhere copying the great Thomas in everything except his thoughtful preaching. A rumour is current that there are one or two young Spurgeons about, but if so I hope that the reference is to my own sons, who have a right to the name by birth. If any of you become mere copyists of me I shall regard you as thorns in the flesh, and rank you among those whom Paul says "we suffer gladly." Yet it has been wisely said that every beginner must of necessity be for a time a copyist; the artist follows his master while as yet he has barely acquired the elements of the art, and perhaps for life he remains a painter of the school to which he at first attached himself; but as he becomes proficient he develops his own individuality, grows into a painter with a style of his own, and is all the better and none the worse for having been in his earliest days content to sit at a master's feet. It is of necessity the same in oratory, and therefore it may be too much to say never copy anyone, but it

may be better to exhort you to imitate the best action you can find, in order that your own style during its formation may be rightly moulded. Correct the influence of any one man by what you see of excellence in others; but still create a manner of your own. Slavish imitation is the practice of an ape, but to follow another where he leads aright, *and there only*, is the wisdom of a prudent man. Still never let a natural originality be missed by your imitating the best models of antiquity, or the most esteemed among the moderns.

In conclusion, do not allow my criticisms upon various grotesque postures and movements to haunt you in the pulpit; better perpetrate them all than be in fear, for this would make you cramped and awkward. Dash at it whether you blunder or no. A few mistakes in this matter will not be half so bad as being nervous. It may be that what would be eccentric in another may be most proper in *you*; therefore take no man's dictum as applicable to every case, or to

your own. See how John Knox is pictured in the well-known engraving. Is his posture graceful? Perhaps not. Yet is it not exactly what it should be? Can you find any fault with it? Is it not Knox-like, and full of power? It would not suit one man in fifty; in most preachers it would seem strained, but in the great Reformer it is characteristic, and accords with his life-work. You must remember the person, the times and his surroundings, and then the mannerism is seen to be well becoming a hero-



preacher sent to do an Elijah's work, and to utter his rebukes in the presence of a Popish court which hated the reforms which he demanded. Be yourself as he was himself; even if you should be ungainly and awkward, be yourself. Your own clothes, though they be homespun, will fit you better than another man's, though made of the best broadcloth; you may follow your tutor's style of dress if you like, but do not borrow his coat, be content to wear

one of your own. Above all, be so full of matter, so fervent, and so gracious that the people will little care how you hand out the word; for if they perceive that it is fresh from heaven, and find it sweet and abundant, they will pay little regard to the basket in which you bring it to them. Let them, if they please, say that your bodily presence is weak, but pray that they may confess that your testimony is weighty and powerful. Commend yourself to every man's conscience in the sight of God, and then the mere mint and anise of posture will seldom be taken into account.

While preparing this lecture it occurred to me to copy a plate which I found in Austin's *Chironomia*, in the hope that it may afford some direction to young speakers. As my lecture mainly shows *how not to do it*, this may be a little help in the positive direction. Of course I do not recommend that so much action should be used in reciting this one piece, or any other; but I would suggest that each posture should be considered apart. Most of the attitudes are natural, striking, and instructive. I do not admire them all, for they are here and there a little forced, but as a whole I know of no better lesson in so short a compass, and being in verse the words will be the more easily remembered.

Considerable expense has been incurred in producing these plates and the wood-engravings of the previous lectures, and therefore the present volume of lectures is a few pages shorter than its predecessor; but anxiety to do the thing thoroughly for the good of my younger brethren has led me to insert what I earnestly hope will be of some slight service to them. Often a mere hint is sufficient. Wise men from one example learn all, and I trust that the following illustrations may suffice to give to many beginners the clue to proper and expressive attitude and gesture.



The wind was high,



the window shakes ;



*With sudden start,
the Miser wakes !*



*Along the silent
room he stalks ;*



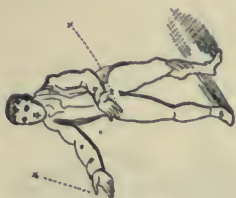
Looks back,



*and trembles
as he walks !*



*Each lock and every
bolt he tries,*



*In every crack
and corner pries;*



*But now with sudden
quains possess,*



*Then opens his chest
with treasure stored.*



*By conscience stung
he wildly starts;*



*And stands in rep-
ture o'er his board:*



*And thus his guilty
soul declares.*



*Had the deep earth
her stores confin'd,*



*The heart had known
sweet peace of mind,*



*But virtue's
sold !*



*Good heavens !
what price*



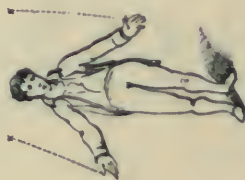
*Can recompense
the pangs of vice ?*



*O bane of good !
seducing cheat !*



*Can man,
weak man,*



*thy pow'r
defeat ?*



*Gold banished honor
from the mind,*



*And only left
the name behind ;*



*Gold sow'd the
world with every ill;*



*Gold taught the
murderer's sword to kill:*



*'Twas gold instructed
coward hearts*



*In treachery's more
pernicious arts.*



*Who can recount
the mischiefs o'er?*



*Virtue resides on
earth no more!*

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LECTURE VIII.

Earnestness: its Marring and Maintenance.

IF I were asked—What in a Christian minister is the most essential quality for securing success in winning souls for Christ? I should reply, “earnestness”: and if I were asked a second or a third time, I should not vary the answer, for personal observation drives me to the conclusion that, as a rule, real success is proportionate to the preacher’s earnestness. Both great men and little men succeed if they are thoroughly alive unto God, and fail if they are not so. We know men of eminence who have gained a high reputation, who attract large audiences, and obtain much admiration, who nevertheless are very low in the scale as soul-winners: for all they do in that direction they might as well have been lecturers on anatomy, or political orators. At the same time we have seen their compeers in ability so useful in the business of conversion that evidently their acquirements and gifts have been no hindrance to them, but the reverse; for by the intense and devout use of their powers, and by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, they have turned many to righteousness. We have seen brethren of very scanty abilities who have been terrible drags upon a church, and have proved as inefficient in their spheres as blind men in an observatory; but, on the other hand, men of equally small attainments are well known to us as mighty hunters before the Lord, by whose holy energy many hearts have been captured for the Saviour. I delight in M’Cheyne’s remark, “It is not so much great talents that God blesses, as great likeness to Christ.” In many instances ministerial success is traceable almost entirely to an intense zeal, a consuming passion for souls, and an eager enthusiasm in the cause of God, and we believe that in every case, other things being equal, men prosper in the divine service in proportion as their hearts are blazing with holy love. “The God that answereth by fire, let him be God”; and the man who has the tongue of fire, let him be God’s minister.

Brethren, you and I must, as preachers, be always earnest in reference to our pulpit work. Here we must labour to attain the very highest degree of excellence. Often have I said to my brethren that the pulpit is the Thermopylæ of Christendom: there the fight will be lost or won. To us ministers the maintenance of our power in the pulpit should be our great concern, we must occupy that spiritual watch-tower with our hearts and minds awake and in full vigour. It will not avail us to be laborious pastors if we are not earnest preachers. We shall be forgiven a great many sins in the matter of pastoral visitation if the people's souls are really fed on the Sabbath-day; but fed they must be, and nothing else will make up for it. The failures of most ministers who drift down the stream may be traced to inefficiency in the pulpit. The chief business of a captain is to know how to handle his vessel, nothing can compensate for deficiency there, and so our pulpits must be our main care, or all will go awry. Dogs often fight because the supply of bones is scanty, and congregations frequently quarrel because they do not get sufficient spiritual meat to keep them happy and peaceful. The ostensible ground of dissatisfaction may be something else, but nine times out of ten deficiency in their rations is at the bottom of the mutinies which occur in our churches. Men, like all other animals, know when they are fed, and they usually feel good tempered after a meal; and so when our hearers come to the house of God, and obtain "food convenient for them," they forget a great many grievances in the joy of the festival, but if we send them away hungry they will be in as irritable a mood as a bear robbed of her whelps.

Now, in order that we may be acceptable, *we must be earnest when actually engaged in preaching.* Cecil has well said that the spirit and manner of a preacher often effect more than his matter. To go into the pulpit with the listless air of those gentlemen who loll about, and lean upon the cushion as if they had at last reached a quiet resting place, is, I think, most censurable. To rise before the people to deal out commonplaces which have cost you nothing, as if anything would do for a sermon, is not merely derogatory to the dignity of our office, but is offensive in the sight of God. We must be earnest in the pulpit for our own sakes, for we shall not long be able to maintain our position as leaders in the church of God if we are dull. Moreover, for the sake of our church members, and converted people, we must be energetic, for if we are not zealous, neither will they be. It is not in the

order of nature that rivers should run uphill, and it does not often happen that zeal rises from the pew to the pulpit. It is natural that it should flow down from us to our hearers; the pulpit must therefore stand at a high level of ardour, if we are, under God, to make and to keep our people fervent. Those who attend our ministry have a great deal to do during the week. Many of them have family trials, and heavy personal burdens to carry, and they frequently come into the assembly cold and listless, with thoughts wandering hither and thither; it is ours to take those thoughts and thrust them into the furnace of our own earnestness, melt them by holy contemplation and by intense appeal, and pour them out into the mould of the truth. A blacksmith can do nothing when his fire is out, and in this respect he is the type of a minister. If all the lights in the outside world are quenched, the lamp which burns in the sanctuary ought still to remain undimmed; for that fire no curfew must ever be rung. We must regard the people as the wood and the sacrifice, well wetted a second and a third time by the cares of the week, upon which, like the prophet, we must pray down the fire from heaven. A dull minister creates a dull audience. You cannot expect the office-bearers and the members of the church to travel by steam if their own chosen pastor still drives the old broadwheeled waggon. We ought each one to be like that reformer who is described as "*Viridus vultus, viridi oculi, vivide manus, denique omnia vivida*," which I would rather freely render—"a countenance beaming with life, eyes and hands full of life, in fine, a vivid preacher, altogether alive."

"Thy soul must overflow, if thou
Another's soul would reach,
It needs the overflow of heart
To give the lips full speech."

The world also will suffer as well as the church if we are not fervent. We cannot expect a gospel devoid of earnestness to have any mighty effect upon the unconverted around us. One of the excuses most soporific to the conscience of an ungodly generation is that of half-heartedness in the preacher. If the sinner finds the preacher nodding while he talks of judgment to come, he concludes that the judgment is a thing which the preacher is dreaming about, and he resolves to regard it all as mere fiction. The whole outside world receives serious danger from the cold-hearted preacher, for it draws the same conclusion as the individual sinner: it perseveres in its own listlessness, it gives its strength to its own transient objects, and thinks itself wise for

so doing. How can it be otherwise? If the prophet leaves his heart behind him when he professes to speak in the name of God, what can he expect but that the ungodly around him will persuade themselves that there is nothing in his message, and that his commission is a farce.

Hear how Whitefield preached, and never dare to be lethargic again. Winter says of him that "sometimes he exceedingly wept, and was frequently so overcome, that for a few seconds you would suspect he never would recover; and when he did, nature required some little time to compose herself. I hardly ever knew him go through a sermon without weeping more or less. His voice was often interrupted by his affections; and I have heard him say in the pulpit, 'You blame me for weeping; but how can I help it, when you will not weep for yourselves, although your own immortal souls are on the verge of destruction, and, for aught I know, you are hearing your last sermon, and may never more have an opportunity to have Christ offered to you?'"

Earnestness in the pulpit must be real. It is not to be mimicked. We have seen it counterfeited, but every person with a grain of sense could detect the imposition. To stamp the foot, to smite the desk, to perspire, to shout, to bawl, to quote the pathetic portions of other people's sermons, or to pour out voluntary tears from a watery eye will never make up for true agony of soul and real tenderness of spirit. The best piece of acting is but acting; those who only look at appearances may be pleased by it, but lovers of reality will be disgusted. What presumption!—what hypocrisy it is by skilful management of the voice to mimic the passion which is the genuine work of the Holy Ghost. Let mere actors beware, lest they be found sinning against the Holy Spirit by their theatrical performances. We must be earnest in the pulpit because we are earnest everywhere; we must blaze in our discourses because we are continually on fire. Zeal which is stored up to be let off only on grand occasions is a gas which will one day destroy its proprietor. Nothing but truth may appear in the house of the Lord; all affectation is strange fire, and excites the indignation of the God of truth. Be earnest, and you will *seem* to be earnest. A burning heart will soon find for itself a flaming tongue. To sham earnestness is one of the most contemptible of dodges for courting popularity; let us abhor the very thought. Go and be listless in the pulpit if you are so in your heart. Be slow in speech, drawling in tone, and monotonous in voice, if so you can best express your soul; even that would be

infinitely better than to make your ministry a masquerade and yourself an actor.

But our zeal while in the act of preaching must be followed up by intense solicitude as to the after results ; for if it be not so we shall have cause to question our sincerity. God will not send a harvest of souls to those who never watch or water the fields which they have sown. When the sermon is over we have only let down the net which afterwards we are to draw to shore by prayer and watchfulness. Here, I think, I cannot do better than allow a far abler advocate to plead with you, and quote the words of Dr. Watts:—"Be very solicitous about the success of your labours in the pulpit. Water the seed sown, not only with public, but secret prayer. Plead with God importunately that he would not suffer you to labour in vain. Be not like that foolish bird the ostrich, which lays her eggs in the dust, and leaves them there regardless whether they come to life or not. (Job xxxix. 14-17). God hath not given her understanding, but let not this folly be your character or practice ; labour, and watch, and pray, that your sermons and the fruit of your studies may become words of Divine life to souls.

It is an observation of pious Mr. Baxter (which I have read somewhere in his works), that he has never known any considerable success from the brightest and noblest talents, nor from the most excellent kind of preaching, nor even when the preachers themselves have been truly religious, if they have not had a solicitous concern for the success of their ministrations. Let the awful and important thought of souls being saved by our preaching, or left to perish and to be condemned to hell through our negligence,—I say, let this awful and tremendous thought dwell ever upon our spirits. We are made watchmen to the house of Israel, as Ezekiel was ; and, if we give no warning of approaching danger, the souls of multitudes may perish through our neglect ; but the blood of souls will be terribly required at our hands (Ezekiel iii. 17, &c.)."

Such considerations should make us instant in season and out of season, and cause us at all times to be clad with zeal as with a cloak. We ought to be all alive, and always alive. A pillar of light and fire should be the preacher's fit emblem. Our ministry must be emphatic, or it will never affect these thoughtless times ; and to this end our hearts must be habitually fervent, and our whole nature must be fired with an all-consuming passion for the glory of God and the good of men.

Now, my brethren, it is sadly true that holy earnestness when

we once obtain it may be easily damped; and as a matter of fact it is more frequently chilled in the loneliness of a village pastorate than amid the society of warm-hearted Christian brethren. Adam, the author of "Private Thoughts," once observed that "a poor country parson, fighting against the devil in his parish, has nobler ideas than Alexander the Great ever had;" and I will add, that he needs more than Alexander's ardour to enable him to continue victorious in his holy warfare. Sleepy Hollow and Dormer's Land will be too much for us unless we pray for daily quickening.

Yet town life has its dangers too, and zeal is apt to burn low through numerous engagements, like a fire which is scattered abroad instead of being raked together into a heap. Those incessant knocks at our door, and perpetual visits from idle persons, are so many buckets of cold water thrown upon our devout zeal. We must by some means secure uninterrupted meditation, or we shall lose power. London is a peculiarly trying sphere on this account.

Zeal also is more quickly checked after long years of continuance in the same service than when novelty gives a charm to our work. Mr. Wesley says, in his fifteenth volume of "Journals and Letters," "I know that, were I myself to preach one whole year in one place, I should preach both myself and most of my congregation asleep." What then must it be to abide in the same pulpit for many years! In such a case it is not the pace that kills, but the length of the race. Our God is evermore the same, enduring for ever, and he alone can enable us to endure even to the end. He, who at the end of twenty years' ministry among the same people is more alive than ever, is a great debtor to the quickening Spirit.

Earnestness may be, and too often is, diminished by neglect of study. If we have not exercised ourselves in the word of God, we shall not preach with the fervour and grace of the man who has fed upon the truth he delivers, and is therefore strong and ardent. An Englishman's earnestness in battle depends, according to some authorities, upon his being well fed: he has no stomach for the fight if he is starved. If we are well nourished by sound gospel food we shall be vigorous and fervent. An old blunt commander at Cadiz is described by Selden as thus addressing his soldiers:—"What a shame will it be, you Englishmen, who feed upon good beef and beer, to let these rascally Spaniards beat you that eat nothing but oranges and lemons!" His philosophy and mine agree: he expected courage and valour from those who were well nourished. Brethren, never neglect your spiritual meals, or you will

lack stamina and your spirits will sink. Live on the substantial doctrines of grace, and you will outlive and out-work those who delight in the pastry and syllabubs of "modern thought."

Zeal may, on the other hand, be damped by our studies. There is, no doubt, such a thing as feeding the brain at the expense of the heart, and many a man in his aspirations to be literary has rather qualified himself to write reviews than to preach sermons. A quaint evangelist was wont to say that Christ hung crucified beneath Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. It ought not to be so, but it has often happened that the student in college has gathered fuel, but lost the fire which is to kindle it. It will be to our everlasting disgrace if we bury our flame beneath the faggots which are intended to sustain it. If we degenerate into bookworms it will be to the old serpent's delight, and to our own misery.

True earnestness may be greatly lessened by levity in conversation, and especially by jesting with brother ministers, in whose company we often take greater liberties than we would like to do in the society of other Christians. There are excellent reasons for our feeling at home with our brethren, but if this freedom be carried too far we shall soon feel that we have suffered damage through vanity of speech. Cheerfulness is one thing, and frivolity is another; he is a wise man who by a serious happiness of conversation steers between the dark rocks of moroseness, and the quicksands of levity.

We shall often find ourselves in danger of being deteriorated in zeal by the cold Christian people with whom we come in contact. What terrible wet blankets some professors are! Their remarks after a sermon are enough to stagger you. You think that surely you have moved the very stones to feeling, but you painfully learn that these people are utterly unaffected. You have been burning and they are freezing; you have been pleading as for life or death and they have been calculating how many seconds the sermon occupied, and grudging you the odd five minutes beyond the usual hour, which your earnestness compelled you to occupy in pleading with men's souls. If these frost-bitten men should happen to be the officers of the church, from whom you naturally expect the warmest sympathy, the result is chilling to the last degree, and all the more so if you are young and inexperienced: it is as though an angel were confined in an iceberg. "Thou shalt not yoke the ox and the ass together" was a merciful precept: but when a laborious, ox-like minister comes to be yoked to a deacon who is not another ox, it becomes hard work to plough. Some crabbed

professors have a great deal to answer for in this matter. One of them not so very long ago went up to an earnest young evangelist who had been doing his best, and said, "Young man, do you call that preaching?" He thought himself faithful, but he was cruel and uncourteous, and though the good brother survived the blow it was none the less brutal. Such offences against the Lord's little ones are, I hope, very rare, but they are very grievous, and tend to turn aside our hopeful youth.

Frequently the audience itself, as a whole, will damp your zeal. You can see by their very look and manner that the people are not appreciating your warm-hearted endeavours, and you feel discouraged. Those empty benches also are a serious trial, and if the place be large, and the congregation small, the influence is seriously depressing: it is not every man who can bear to be "a voice crying in the wilderness." Disorder in the congregation also sadly afflicts sensitive speakers. The walking up the aisle of a woman with a pair of pattens, the squeak of a pair of new boots, the frequent fall of umbrellas and walking-sticks, the crying of infants, and especially the consistent lateness of half the assembly;—all these tend to irritate the mind, take it off from its object, and diminish its ardour. We hardly like to confess that our hearts are so readily affected by such trifles, but it is so, and not at all to be wondered at. As pots of the most precious ointment are more often spoilt by dead flies than by dead camels, so insignificant matters will destroy earnestness more readily than greater annoyances. Under a great discouragement a man pulls himself together, and then throws himself upon his God, and receives divine strength: but under lesser depressions he may possibly worry, and the trifle will irritate and fester till serious consequences follow.

Pardon my saying that the condition of your body must be attended to, especially in the matter of eating, for any measure of excess may injure your digestion and make you stupid when you should be fervent. From the memoir of Duncan Matheson I cull an anecdote which is much to the point: "In a certain place where evangelistic meetings were being held, the lay preachers, among whom was Mr. Matheson, were sumptuously entertained at the house of a Christian gentleman. After dinner they went to the meeting, not without some difference of opinion as to the best method of conducting the services of the evening. 'The Spirit is grieved; he is not here at all, I feel it,' said one of the younger, with a whine which somewhat contrasted with his previous

unbounded enjoyment of the luxuries of the table. ‘Nonsense,’ replied Matheson, who hated all whining and morbid spirituality; ‘Nothing of the sort. You have just eaten too much dinner, and you feel heavy.’” Duncan Matheson was right, and a little more of his common sense would be a great gain to some who are ultra spiritual, and attribute all their moods of feeling to some supernatural cause when the real reason lies far nearer to hand. Has it not often happened that dyspepsia has been mistaken for back-sliding, and a bad digestion has been set down as a hard heart? I say no more: a word to the wise is enough.

Many physical and mental causes may operate to create apparent lethargy where there is at heart intense earnestness. Upon some of us a disturbed night, a change in the weather, or an unkind remark, will produce the most lamentable effect. But those who complain of want of zeal are often the most zealous persons in the world, and a confession of want of life is itself an argument that life exists, and is not without vigour. Do not spare yourselves and become self-satisfied; but, on the other hand, do not slander yourselves and sink into despondency. Your own opinion of your state is not worth much: ask the Lord to search you.

Long continued labour without visible success is another frequent damp upon zeal, though if rightly viewed it ought to be an incentive to sevenfold diligence. Quaint Thomas Fuller observes that “herein God hath humbled many painstaking pastors, in making them to be clouds to rain, not over Arabia the happy, but over Arabia the desert and stony.” If non-success humbles us it is well, but if it discourages us, and especially if it leads us to think bitterly of more prosperous brethren, we ought to look about us with grave concern. It is possible that we have been faithful and have adopted wise methods, and are in our right place, and yet we have not struck the mark; we shall probably be heavily bowed down and feel scarcely able to continue the work; but if we pluck up courage and increase our earnestness we shall one day reap a rich harvest, which will more than repay us for all our waiting. “The husbandman *waiteth* for the precious fruits of the earth”; and with a holy patience begotten of zeal we must wait on, and never doubt that the time to favour Zion will yet come.

Nor must it ever be forgotten that the flesh is weak and naturally inclined to slumber. We need a constant renewal of the divine impulse which first started us in the way of service. We are not as arrows, which find their way to the target by the

sole agency of the force with which they started from the bow; nor as birds, which bear within themselves their own motive power: we must be borne onward, like ships at sea, by the constant power of the heavenly wind, or we shall make no headway. Preachers sent from God are not musical boxes which, being once wound up, will play through their set tunes, but they are trumpets which are utterly mute until the living breath causes them to give forth a certain sound. We read of some who are dumb dogs, given to slumber, and such would be the character of us all if the grace of God did not prevent. We have need to watch against a careless, indifferent spirit, and if we do not so we shall soon be as lukewarm as Laodicea itself.

Remembering then, dear brethren, that we must be in earnest, and that we cannot counterfeit earnestness, or find a substitute for it, and that it is very easy for us to lose it, let us consider for a while the ways and means for retaining all our fervour and gaining more. If it is to continue, *our earnestness must be kindled at an immortal flame*, and I know of but one—the flame of the love of Christ, which many waters cannot quench. A spark from that celestial sun will be as undying as the source from whence it came. If we can get it, yea, if we have it, we shall still be full of enthusiasm, however long we may live, however greatly we may be tried, and however much for many reasons we may be discouraged. To continue fervent for life we must possess the fervour of heavenly life to begin with. Have we this fire? We must have the truth burnt into our souls, or it will not burn upon our lips. Do we understand this? The doctrines of grace must be part and parcel of ourselves, interwoven with the warp and woof of our being, and this can only be effected by the same hand which originally made the fabric. We shall never lose our love to Christ and our love to souls if the Lord has given them to us. The Holy Spirit makes zeal for God to be a permanent principle of life rather than a passion,—does the Holy Spirit rest upon us, or is our present fervour a mere human feeling? We ought upon this point to be seriously inquisitorial with our hearts, pressing home the question, Have we the holy fire which springs from a true call to the ministry? If not, why are we here? If a man *can* live without preaching, let him live without preaching. If a man can be content without being a soul-winner—I had almost said he had better not attempt the work, but I had rather say—let him seek to have the stone taken out of his heart, that he may feel for perishing men. Till then, as a minister, he may do positive

mischief by occupying the place of one who might have succeeded in the blessed work in which *he* must be a failure.

The fire of our earnestness must burn upon the hearth of faith in the truths which we preach, and faith in their power to bless mankind when the Spirit applies them to the heart. He who declares what may or what may not be true, and what he considers upon the whole to be as good as any other form of teaching, will of necessity make a very feeble preacher. How can he be zealous about that which he is not sure of? If he knows nothing of the inward power of the truth within his own heart, if he has never tasted and handled of the good word of life, how can he be enthusiastic? But if the Holy Ghost has taught us in secret places, and made our soul to understand within itself the doctrine which we are to proclaim, then shall we speak evermore with the tongue of fire. Brother, do not begin to teach others till the Lord has taught *you*. It must be dreary work to parrot forth dogmas which have no interest for your heart, and carry no conviction to your understanding. I would prefer to pick oakum or turn a crank for my breakfast, like the paupers in the casual ward, rather than be the slave of a congregation and bring them spiritual meat of which I never taste myself. And then how dreadful the end of such a course must be! How fearful the account to be rendered at the last by one who publicly taught what he did not heartily believe, and perpetrated this detestable hypocrisy in the name of God!

Brethren, if the fire is brought *from* the right place *to* the right place, we have a good beginning; and the main elements of a glorious ending. Kindled by a live coal, borne to our lips from off the altar by the winged cherub, the fire has begun to feed upon our inmost spirit, and there it will burn though Satan himself should labour to stamp it out.

Yet the best flame in the world needs renewing. I know not whether immortal spirits, like the angels, drink on the wing, and feed on some superior manna prepared in heaven for them; but the probability is that no created being, though immortal, is quite free from the necessity to receive from without sustenance for its strength. Certainly the flame of zeal in the renewed heart, however divine, must be continually fed with fresh fuel. Even the lamps of the sanctuary needed oil. *Feed the flame, my brother, feed it frequently*; feed it with holy thought and contemplation, especially with thought about your work, your motives in pursuing it, the design of it, the helps that are waiting for you, and the grand results of it if the Lord be with you. Dwell much upon the love

of God to sinners, and the death of Christ on their behalf, and the work of the Spirit upon men's hearts. Think of what must be wrought in men's hearts ere they can be saved. Remember, you are not sent to whiten tombs, but to open them, and this is a work which no man can perform unless, like the Lord Jesus at the grave of Lazarus, he groans in spirit; and even then he is powerless apart from the Holy Ghost. Meditate with deep solemnity upon the fate of the lost sinner, and, like Abraham, when you get up early to go to the place where you commune with God, cast an eye towards Sodom and see the smoke thereof going up like the smoke of a furnace. Shun all views of future punishment which would make it appear less terrible, and so take off the edge of your anxiety to save immortals from the quenchless flame. If men are indeed only a nobler kind of ape, and expire as the beasts, you may well enough let them die unpitied; but if their creation in the image of God involves immortality, and there is any fear that through their unbelief they will bring upon themselves endless woe, arouse yourselves to the agonies of the occasion, and be ashamed at the bare suspicion of unconcern. Think much also of the bliss of the sinner saved, and like holy Baxter derive rich arguments for earnestness from "the saints' everlasting rest." Go to the heavenly hills and gather fuel there; pile on the glorious logs of the wood of Lebanon, and the fire will burn freely and yield a sweet perfume as each piece of choice cedar glows in the flame. There will be no fear of your being lethargic if you are continually familiar with eternal realities.

Above all, feed the flame with intimate fellowship with Christ. No man was ever cold in heart who lived with Jesus on such terms as John and Mary did of old, for *he* makes men's hearts burn within them. I never met with a half-hearted preacher who was much in communion with the Lord Jesus. The zeal of God's house ate up our Lord, and when we come into contact with him it begins to consume us also, and we feel that we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard in his company, nor can we help speaking of them with the fervour which comes out of actual acquaintance with them. Those of us who have been preaching for these five-and-twenty years sometimes feel that the same work, the same subject, the same people, and the same pulpit, are together apt to beget a feeling of monotony, and monotony may soon lead on to weariness. But then we call to mind another sameness, which becomes our complete deliverance; there is the same Saviour, and we may go to him in the same way as we did at the first, since

he is "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." In his presence we drink in the new wine and renew our youth. He is the fountain, for ever flowing with the cool, refreshing water of life, and in fellowship with him we find our souls quickened into perpetual energy. Beneath his smile our long-accustomed work is always delightful, and wears a brighter charm than novelty could have conferred. We gather new manna for our people every morning, and as we go to distribute it we feel an anointing of fresh oil distilling upon us. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." Newly come from the presence of him that walketh among the golden candlesticks we are ready to write or speak unto the churches in the power which he alone can give. Soldiers of Christ, you can only be worthy of your Captain by abiding in fellowship with him, and listening to his voice as Joshua did when he stood by Jordan, and enquired—"What saith my Lord unto his servant?"

Fan the flame as well as feed it. Fan it with much supplication. We cannot be too urgent with one another upon this point: no language can be too vehement with which to implore ministers to pray. There is for our brethren and ourselves an absolute necessity for prayer. Necessity!—I hardly like to talk of that, let me rather speak of the deliciousness of prayer—the wondrous sweetness and divine felicity which come to the soul that lives in the atmosphere of prayer. John Fox said, "The time we spend with God in secret is the sweetest time, and the best improved. Therefore, if thou lovest thy life, be in love with prayer." The devout Mr. Hervey resolved on the bed of sickness—"If God shall spare my life, I will read less and pray more." John Cooke, of Maidenhead, wrote—"The business, the pleasure, the honour, and advantage of prayer press on my spirit with increasing force every day." A deceased pastor when drawing near his end, exclaimed, "I wish I had prayed more;" that wish many of us might utter. There should be special seasons for devotion, and it is well to maintain them with regularity; but the spirit of prayer is even better than the habit of prayer: to pray without ceasing is better than praying at intervals. It will be a happy circumstance if we can frequently bow the knee with devout brethren, and I think it ought to be a rule with us ministers never to separate without a word of prayer. Much more intercession would rise to heaven if we made a point of this, especially those of us

who have been fellow-students. If it be possible, let prayer and praise sanctify each meeting of friend with friend. It is a refreshing practice to have a minute or two of supplication in the vestry before preaching if you can call in three or four warm-hearted deacons or other brethren. It always nerves me for the fight. But, for all that, to fan your earnestness to a vehement flame you should seek the spirit of continual prayer, so as to pray in the Holy Ghost, everywhere and always; in the study, in the vestry, and in the pulpit. It is well to be pleading evermore with God, when sitting down in the pulpit, when rising to give out the hymn, when reading the chapter, and while delivering the sermon; holding up one hand to God empty, in order to receive, and with the other hand dispensing to the people what the Lord bestows. Be in preaching like a conduit pipe between the everlasting and infinite supplies of heaven and the all but boundless needs of men, and to do this you must reach heaven, and keep up the communication without a break. Pray *for* the people while you preach *to* them; speak with God for them while you are speaking with them for God. Only so can you expect to be continually in earnest. A man does not often rise from his knees unearnest; or, if he does, he had better return to prayer till the sacred flame descends upon his soul. Adam Clarke once said, "Study yourself to death, and then pray yourself alive again": it was a wise sentence. Do not attempt the first without the second; neither dream that the second can be honestly accomplished without the first. Work and pray, as well as watch and pray; but pray always.

Stir the fire also by frequent attempts at fresh service. Shake yourself out of routine by breaking away from the familiar fields of service and reclaiming virgin soil. I suggest to you, as a subordinate but very useful means of keeping the heart fresh, the frequent addition of new work to your usual engagements. I would say to brethren who are soon going away from the College, to settle in spheres where they will come into contact with but few superior minds, and perhaps will be almost alone in the higher walks of spirituality,—look well to yourselves that you do not become flat, stale, and unprofitable, and keep yourselves sweet by maintaining an enterprising spirit. You will have a good share of work to do, and few to help you in it, and the years will grind along heavily; watch against this, and use all means to prevent your becoming dull and sleepy, and among them use that which experience leads me to press upon you. I find it

good for myself to have some new work always on hand. The old and usual enterprises must be kept up, but somewhat must be added to them. It should be with us as with the squatters upon our commons, the fence of our garden must roll outward a foot or two, and enclose a little more of the common every year. Never say "it is enough," nor accept the policy of "rest and be thankful." Do all you possibly can, and then do a little more. I do not know by what process the gentleman who advertises that he can make short people taller attempts the task, but I should imagine that if any result could be produced in the direction of adding a cubit to one's stature it would be by every morning reaching up as high as you possibly can on tiptoe, and, having done that, trying day by day to reach a little higher. This is certainly the way to grow mentally and spiritually,—“reaching forth to that which is before.” If the old should become just a little stale, add fresh endeavours to it, and the whole mass will be leavened anew. Try it and you will soon discover the virtue of breaking up fresh ground, invading new provinces of the enemy, and scaling fresh heights to set the banner of the Lord thereon. This is, of course, a secondary expedient to those of which we have already spoken, but still it is a very useful one, and may greatly benefit you. In a country town, say of two thousand inhabitants, you will, after a time, feel, “Well, now, I have done about all I can in this place.” What then? There is a hamlet some four miles off, set about opening a room there. If one hamlet is occupied, make an excursion to another, and spy out the land, and set the relief of its spiritual destitution before you as an ambition. When the first place is supplied, think of a second. It is your duty, it will also be your safeguard. Everybody knows what interest there is in fresh work. A gardener will become weary of his toil unless he is allowed to introduce new flowers into the hothouse, or to cut the beds upon the lawn in a novel shape; all monotonous work is unnatural and wearying to the mind, therefore it is wisdom to give variety to your labour.

Far more weighty is the advice, *keep close to God, and keep close to your fellow men whom you are seeking to bless.* Abide under the shadow of the Almighty, dwell where Jesus manifests himself, and live in the power of the Holy Ghost. Your very life lies in this. Whitefield mentions a lad who was so vividly conscious of the presence of God that he would generally walk the roads with his hat off. How I wish we were always in such a mood. It would be no trouble to maintain earnestness then.

Take care, also, to be on most familiar terms with those whose souls are committed to your care. Stand in the stream and fish. Many preachers are utterly ignorant as to how the bulk of the people are living; they are at home among books, but quite at sea among men. What would you think of a botanist who seldom saw real flowers, or an astronomer who never spent a night with the stars? Would they be worthy of the name of men of science? Neither can a minister of the gospel be anything but a mere empiric unless he mingles with men, and studies character for himself. "Studies from the life,"—gentlemen, we must have plenty of these if we are to paint to the life in our sermons. Read men as well as books, and love *men* rather than opinions, or you will be inanimate preachers.

Get into close quarters with those who are in an anxious state. Watch their difficulties, their throes and pangs of conscience. It will help to make you earnest when you see their eagerness to find peace. On the other hand, when you see how little earnest the bulk of men remain, it may help to make you more zealous for their arousing. Rejoice with those who are finding the Saviour: this is a grand means of revival for your own soul. When you are enabled to bring a mourner to Jesus you will feel quite young again. It will be as oil to your bones to hear a weeping penitent exclaim, "I see it all now! I believe, and my burden is gone: I am saved." Sometimes the rapture of newborn souls will electrify you into apostolic intensity. Who could not preach after having seen souls converted? Be on the spot when grace at last captures the lost sheep, that by sharing in the Great Shepherd's rejoicings you may renew your youth. Be in at the death with sinners, and you will be repaid for the weary chase after them which it may be you have followed for months and years. Grasp them with firm hold of love, and say, "Yes, by the grace of God, I have really won these souls;" and your enthusiasm will flame forth.

If you have to labour in a large town I should recommend you to familiarize yourself, wherever your place of worship may be, with the poverty, ignorance, and drunkenness of the place. Go if you can with a City missionary into the poorest quarter, and you will see that which will astonish you, and the actual sight of the disease will make you eager to reveal the remedy. There is enough of evil to be seen even in the best streets of our great cities, but there is an unutterable depth of horror in the condition of the slums. As a doctor walks the hospitals, so ought you to traverse the

lanes and courts to behold the mischief which sin has wrought. It is enough to make a man weep tears of blood to gaze upon the desolation which sin has made in the earth. One day with a devoted missionary would be a fine termination to your College course, and a fit preparation for work in your own sphere. See the masses living in their sins, defiled with drinking and Sabbath-breaking, rioting and blaspheming; and see them dying sodden and hardened, or terrified and despairing: surely this will rekindle expiring zeal if anything can do it. The world is full of grinding poverty, and crushing sorrow; shame and death are the portion of thousands, and it needs a great gospel to meet the dire necessities of men's souls. Verily it is so. Do you doubt it? Go and see for yourselves. Thus will you learn to preach a great salvation, and magnify the great Saviour, not with your mouth only, but with your heart; and thus will you be married to your work beyond all possibility of deserting it.

Death-beds are grand schools for us. They are intended to act as tonics to brace us to our work. I have come down from the bed-chambers of the dying, and thought that everybody was mad, and myself most of all. I have grudged the earnestness which men devoted to earthly things, and half said to myself,—Why was that man driving along so hastily? Why was that woman walking out in such finery? Since they were all to die so soon, I thought nothing worth their doing but preparing to meet their God. To be often where men die will help us to teach them both to die and to live. M'Cheyne was wont to visit his sick or dying hearers on the Saturday afternoon, for, as he told Dr. James Hamilton, "Before preaching he liked to look over the verge."

I pray you, moreover, measure your work in the light of God. Are you God's servant or not? If you are, how can your heart be cold? Are you sent by a dying Saviour to proclaim his love and win the reward of his wounds, or are you not? If you are, how can you flag? Is the Spirit of God upon you? Has the Lord anointed you to preach glad tidings to the poor? If he has not, do not pretend to it. If he has, go in this thy might, and the Lord shall be thy strength. Yours is not a trade, or a profession. Assuredly if you measure it by the tradesman's measure it is the poorest business on the face of the earth. Consider it as a profession: who would not prefer any other, so far as golden gains or worldly honours are concerned? But if it be a divine calling, and you a miracle-worker, dwelling in the supernatural, and working not for time but for eternity, then you belong to a nobler

guild, and to a higher fraternity than any that spring of earth and deal with time. Look at it aright, and you will own that it is a grand thing to be as poor as your Lord, if, like him, you may make many rich; you will feel that it is a glorious thing to be as unknown and despised as were your Lord's first followers, because you are making him known, whom to know is life eternal. You will be satisfied to be anything or to be nothing, and the thought of self will not enter your mind, or only cross it to be scouted as a meanness not to be tolerated by a consecrated man. There is the point. Measure your work as it should be measured, and I am not afraid that your earnestness will be diminished. Gaze upon it by the light of the judgment day, and in view of the eternal rewards of faithfulness. Oh, brethren, the present joy of having saved a soul is overwhelmingly delightful; you have felt it, I trust, and know it now. To save a soul from going down to perdition brings to us a little heaven below, but what must it be at the day of judgment to meet spirits redeemed by Christ, who learned the news of their redemption from our lips! We look forward to a blissful heaven in communion with our Master, but we shall also know the added joy of meeting those loved ones whom we led to Jesus by our ministry. Let us endure every cross, and despise all shame, for the joy which Jesus sets before us of winning men for him.

One more thought may help to keep up our earnestness. Consider the great evil which will certainly come upon us and upon our hearers if we be negligent in our work. "They shall perish"—is not that a dreadful sentence? It is to me quite as awful as that which follows it,—“but their blood will I require at the watchman's hand.” How shall we describe the doom of an unfaithful minister? And every unearnest minister is unfaithful. I would infinitely prefer to be consigned to Tophet as a murderer of men's bodies than as a destroyer of men's souls; neither do I know of any condition in which a man can perish so fatally, so infinitely, as in that of the man who preaches a gospel which he does not believe, and assumes the office of pastor over a people whose good he does not intensely desire. Let us pray to be found faithful always, and ever. God grant that the Holy Spirit may make and keep us so.

LECTURE IX.

The Blind Eye and the Deaf Ear.

HAVING often said in this room that a minister ought to have one blind eye and one deaf ear, I have excited the curiosity of several brethren, who have requested an explanation; for it appears to them, as it does also to me, that the keener eyes and ears we have the better. Well, gentlemen, since the text is somewhat mysterious, you shall have the exegesis of it.

A part of my meaning is expressed in plain language by Solomon, in the book of Ecclesiastes (vii. 21): "Also take no heed unto all words that are spoken; lest thou hear thy servant curse thee." The margin says, "Give not thy heart to all words that are spoken;"—do not take them to heart or let them weigh with you, do not notice them, or act as if you heard them. You cannot stop people's tongues, and therefore the best thing is to stop your own ears and never mind what is spoken. There is a world of idle chit-chat abroad, and he who takes note of it will have enough to do. He will find that even those who live with him are not always singing his praises, and that when he has displeased his most faithful servants they have, in the heat of the moment, spoken fierce words which it would be better for him not to have heard. Who has not, under temporary irritation, said that of another which he has afterwards regretted? It is the part of the generous to treat passionate words as if they had never been uttered. When a man is in an angry mood it is wise to walk away from him, and leave off strife before it be meddled with; and if we are compelled to hear hasty language, we must endeavour to obliterate it from the memory, and say with David, "But I, as a deaf man, heard not. I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs." Tacitus describes a wise man as saying to one that railed at him, "You are lord of your tongue, but I am also master of my ears"—you may say what you please, but I will only hear what I choose.

We cannot shut our ears as we do our eyes, for we have no ear lids, and yet, as we read of him that "stoppeeth his ears from hearing of blood," it is, no doubt, possible to seal the portal of the ear so that nothing contraband shall enter. We would say of the general gossip of the village, and of the unadvised words of angry friends—do not hear them, or if you must hear them, do not lay them to heart, for you also have talked idly and angrily in your day, and would even now be in an awkward position if you were called to account for every word that you have spoken, even about your dearest friend. Thus Solomon argued as he closed the passage which we have quoted,—“For oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others.”

In enlarging upon my text, let me say first,—when you commence your ministry make up your mind to begin with a clean sheet; *be deaf and blind to the longstanding differences which may survive in the church.* As soon as you enter upon your pastorate you may be waited upon by persons who are anxious to secure your adhesion to their side in a family quarrel or church dispute; be deaf and blind to these people, and assure them that bygones must be bygones with you, and that as you have not inherited your predecessor's cupboard you do not mean to eat his cold meat. If any flagrant injustice has been done, be diligent to set it right, but if it be a mere feud, bid the quarrelsome party cease from it, and tell him once for all that you will have nothing to do with it. The answer of Gallio will almost suit you: “If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you: but if it be a question of words and names, and vain janglings, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters.” When I came to New Park-street Chapel as a young man from the country, and was chosen pastor, I was speedily interviewed by a good man who had left the church, having, as he said, been “treated shamefully.” He mentioned the names of half-a-dozen persons, all prominent members of the church, who had behaved in a very unchristian manner to him, he, poor innocent sufferer, having been a model of patience and holiness. I learned his character at once from what he said about others (a mode of judging which has never misled me), and I made up my mind how to act. I told him that the church had been in a sadly unsettled state, and that the only way out of the snarl was for every one to forget the past and begin again. He said that the lapse of years did not alter facts, and I replied that it would alter a man's view of them if in that time he had become a wiser and a better man.

However, I added, that all the past had gone away with my predecessors, that he must follow them to their new spheres, and settle matters with *them*, for I would not touch the affair with a pair of tongs. He waxed somewhat warm, but I allowed him to radiate until he was cool again, and we shook hands and parted. He was a good man, but constructed upon an uncomfortable principle, so that he came across the path of others in a very awkward manner at times, and if I had gone into his narrative and examined his case, there would have been no end to the strife. I am quite certain that, for my own success, and for the prosperity of the church, I took the wisest course by applying my blind eye to all disputes which dated previously to my advent. It is the extreme of unwisdom for a young man fresh from college, or from another charge, to suffer himself to be earwigged by a clique, and to be bribed by kindness and flattery to become a partisan, and so to ruin himself with one-half of his people. Know nothing of parties and cliques, but be the pastor of all the flock, and care for all alike. Blessed are the peacemakers, and one sure way of peacemaking is to let the fire of contention alone. Neither fan it, nor stir it, nor add fuel to it, but let it go out of itself. Begin your ministry with one blind eye and one deaf ear.

I should recommend the use of the same faculty, or want of faculty, with regard to finance in the matter of your own salary. There are some occasions, especially in raising a new church, when you may have no deacon who is qualified to manage that department, and, therefore, you may feel called upon to undertake it yourselves. In such a case you are not to be censured, you ought even to be commended. Many a time also the work would come to an end altogether if the preacher did not act as his own deacon, and find supplies both temporal and spiritual by his own exertions. To these exceptional cases I have nothing to say but that I admire the struggling worker and deeply sympathize with him, for he is overweighted, and is apt to be a less successful soldier for his Lord because he is entangled with the affairs of this life. In churches which are well established, and afford a decent maintenance, the minister will do well to supervise all things, but interfere with nothing. If deacons cannot be trusted they ought not to be deacons at all, but if they are worthy of their office they are worthy of our confidence. I know that instances occur in which they are sadly incompetent and yet must be borne with, and in such a state of things the pastor must open the eye which otherwise would have remained blind. Rather than the management of

church funds should become a scandal we must resolutely interfere, but if there is no urgent call for us to do so we had better believe in the division of labour, and let deacons do their own work. We have the same right as other officers to deal with financial matters if we please, but it will be our wisdom as much as possible to let them alone, if others will manage them for us. When the purse is bare, the wife sickly, and the children numerous, the preacher *must* speak if the church does not properly provide for him; but to be constantly bringing before the people requests for an increase of income is not wise. When a minister is poorly remunerated, and he feels that he is worth more, and that the church could give him more, he ought kindly, boldly, and firmly to communicate with the deacons first, and if they do not take it up he should then mention it to the brethren in a sensible, business-like way, not as craving a charity, but as putting it to their sense of honour, that "the labourer is worthy of his hire." Let him say outright what he thinks, for there is nothing to be ashamed of, but there would be much more cause for shame if he dishonoured himself and the cause of God by plunging into debt: let him therefore speak to the point in a proper spirit to the proper persons, and there end the matter, and not resort to secret complaining. Faith in God should tone down our concern about temporalities, and enable us to practise what we preach, namely—"Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink; or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." Some who have pretended to live by faith have had a very shrewd way of drawing out donations by turns of the indirect corkscrew, but you will either ask plainly, like men, or you will leave it to the Christian feeling of your people, and turn to the items and modes of church finance a blind eye and a deaf ear.

The blind eye and the deaf ear will come in exceedingly well in connection with the gossips of the place. Every church, and, for the matter of that, every village and family, is plagued with certain Mrs. Grundys, who drink tea and talk vitriol. They are never quiet, but buzz around to the great annoyance of those who are devout and practical. No one needs to look far for perpetual motion, he has only to watch their tongues. At tea-meetings, Dorcas meetings, and other gatherings, they practise vivisection upon the characters of their neighbours, and of course they are eager to try their knives upon the minister, the minister's wife, the minister's children, the minister's wife's bonnet, the dress of the minister's

daughter, and how many new ribbons she has worn for the last six months, and so on *ad infinitum*. There are also certain persons who are never so happy as when they are "grieved to the heart" to have to tell the minister that Mr. A. is a snake in the grass, that he is quite mistaken in thinking so well of Messrs. B and C., and that they have heard quite "promiscuously" that Mr. D. and his wife are badly matched. Then follows a long string about Mrs. E., who says that she and Mrs. F. overheard Mrs. G. say to Mrs. H. that Mrs. J. should say that Mr. K. and Miss L. were going to move from the chapel and hear Mr. M., and all because of what old N. said to young O. about that Miss P. Never listen to such people. Do as Nelson did when he put his blind eye to the telescope and declared that he did not see the signal, and therefore would go on with the battle. Let the creatures buzz, and do not even hear them, unless indeed they buzz so much concerning one person that the matter threatens to be serious; then it will be well to bring them to book and talk in sober earnestness to them. Assure them that you are obliged to have facts definitely before you, that your memory is not very tenacious, that you have many things to think of, that you are always afraid of making any mistake in such matters, and that if they would be good enough to write down what they have to say the case would be more fully before you, and you could give more time to its consideration. Mrs. Grundy will not do that; she has a great objection to making clear and definite statements; she prefers talking at random.

I heartily wish that by any process we could put down gossip, but I suppose that it will never be done so long as the human race continues what it is, for James tells us that "every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: but the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." What can't be cured must be endured, and the best way of enduring it is not to listen to it. Over one of our old castles a former owner has inscribed these lines—

THEY SAY.

WHAT DO THEY SAY?

LET THEM SAY.

Thin-skinned persons should learn this motto by heart. The talk of the village is never worthy of notice, and you should never take any interest in it except to mourn over the malice and heartlessness of which it is too often the indicator.

Mayow in his "Plain Preaching" very forcibly says, "If you

were to see a woman killing a farmer's ducks and geese, for the sake of having one of the feathers, you would see a person acting as we do when we speak evil of anyone, for the sake of the pleasure we feel in evil speaking. For the pleasure we feel is not worth a single feather, and the pain we give is often greater than a man feels at the loss of his property." Insert a remark of this kind now and then in a sermon, when there is no special gossip abroad, and it may be of some benefit to the more sensible: I quite despair of the rest.

Above all, never join in tale-bearing yourself, and beg your wife to abstain from it also. Some men are too talkative by half, and remind me of the young man who was sent to Socrates to learn oratory. On being introduced to the philosopher he talked so incessantly that Socrates asked for double fees. "Why charge me double?" said the young fellow. "Because," said the orator, "I must teach you two sciences: the one how to hold your tongue and the other how to speak." The first science is the more difficult, but aim at proficiency in it, or you will suffer greatly, and create trouble without end.

Avoid with your whole soul that spirit of suspicion which sours some men's lives, and *to all things from which you might harshly draw an unkind inference turn a blind eye and a deaf ear*. Suspicion makes a man a torment to himself and a spy towards others. Once begin to suspect, and causes for distrust will multiply around you, and your very suspiciousness will create the major part of them. Many a friend has been transformed into an enemy by being suspected. Do not, therefore, look about you with the eyes of mistrust, nor listen as an eaves-dropper with the quick ear of fear. To go about the congregation ferreting out disaffection, like a gamekeeper after rabbits, is a mean employment, and is generally rewarded most sorrowfully. Lord Bacon wisely advises "the provident stay of enquiry of that which we would be loth to find." When nothing is to be discovered which will help us to love others we had better cease from the enquiry, for we may drag to light that which may be the commencement of years of contention. I am not, of course, referring to cases requiring discipline which must be thoroughly investigated and boldly dealt with, but I have upon my mind mere personal matters where the main sufferer is yourself; here it is always best not to know, nor to wish to know, what is being said about you, either by friends or foes. Those who praise us are probably as much mistaken as those who abuse us, and the one may be regarded as a set off to the other, if

indeed it be worth while taking any account at all of man's judgment. If we have the approbation of our God, certified by a placid conscience, we can afford to be indifferent to the opinions of our fellow men, whether they commend or condemn. If we cannot reach this point we are babes and not men.

Some are childishly anxious to know their friend's opinion of them, and if it contain the smallest element of dissent or censure, they regard him as an enemy forthwith. Surely we are not popes, and do not wish our hearers to regard us as infallible! We have known men become quite enraged at a perfectly fair and reasonable remark, and regard an honest friend as an opponent who delighted to find fault; this misrepresentation on the one side has soon produced heat on the other, and strife has ensued. How much better is gentle forbearance! You must be able to bear criticism, or you are not fit to be at the head of a congregation; and you must let the critic go without reckoning him among your deadly foes, or you will prove yourself a mere weakling. It is wisest always to show double kindness where you have been severely handled by one who thought it his duty to do so, for he is probably an honest man and worth winning. He who in your early days hardly thinks you fit for the pastorate may yet become your firmest defender if he sees that you grow in grace, and advance in qualification for the work; do not, therefore, regard him as a foe for truthfully expressing his doubts; does not your own heart confess that his fears were not altogether groundless? Turn your deaf ear to what you judge to be his harsh criticism, and endeavour to preach better.

Persons from love of change, from pique, from advance in their tastes, and other causes, may become uneasy under our ministry, and it is well for us to know nothing about it. Perceiving the danger, we must not betray our discovery, but bestir ourselves to improve our sermons, hoping that the good people will be better fed and forget their dissatisfaction. If they are truly gracious persons, the incipient evil will pass away, and no real discontent will arise, or if it does you must not provoke it by suspecting it.

Where I have known that there existed a measure of disaffection to myself, I have not recognised it, unless it has been forced upon me, but have, on the contrary, acted towards the opposing person with all the more courtesy and friendliness, and I have never heard any more of the matter. If I had treated the good man as an opponent, he would have done his best to take the part assigned

him, and carry it out to his own credit; but I felt that he was a Christian man, and had a right to dislike me if he thought fit, and that if he did so I ought not to think unkindly of him; and therefore I treated him as one who was a friend to my Lord, if not to me, gave him some work to do which implied confidence in him, made him feel at home, and by degrees won him to be an attached friend as well as a fellow-worker. The best of people are sometimes out at elbows and say unkind things; *we* should be glad if our friends could quite forget what we said when we were peevish and irritable, and it will be Christlike to act towards others in this matter as we would wish them to do towards us. Never make a brother remember that he once uttered a hard speech in reference to yourself. If you see him in a happier mood, do not mention the former painful occasion: if he be a man of right spirit he will in future be unwilling to vex a pastor who has treated him so generously, and if he be a mere boor it is a pity to hold any argument with him, and therefore the past had better go by default.

It would be better to be deceived a hundred times than to live a life of suspicion. It is intolerable. The miser who traverses his chamber at midnight and hears a burglar in every falling leaf is not more wretched than the minister who believes that plots are hatching against him, and that reports to his disadvantage are being spread. I remember a brother who believed that he was being poisoned, and was persuaded that even the seat he sat upon and the clothes he wore had by some subtle chemistry become saturated with death; his life was a perpetual scare, and such is the existence of a minister when he mistrusts all around him. Nor is suspicion merely a source of disquietude, it is a moral evil, and injures the character of the man who harbours it. Suspicion in kings creates tyranny, in husbands jealousy, and in ministers bitterness; such bitterness as in spirit dissolves all the ties of the pastoral relation, eating like a corrosive acid into the very soul of the office and making it a curse rather than a blessing. When once this terrible evil has curdled all the milk of human kindness in a man's bosom, he becomes more fit for the detective police force than for the ministry; like a spider, he begins to cast out his lines, and fashions a web of tremulous threads, all of which lead up to himself and warn him of the least touch of even the tiniest midge. There he sits in the centre, a mass of sensation, all nerves and raw wounds, excitable and excited, a self-immolated martyr drawing the blazing faggots about him, and apparently anxious to be

burned. The most faithful friend is unsafe under such conditions. The most careful avoidance of offence will not secure immunity from mistrust, but will probably be construed into cunning and cowardice. Society is almost as much in danger from a suspecting man as from a mad dog, for he snaps on all sides without reason, and scatters right and left the foam of his madness. It is vain to reason with the victim of this folly, for with perverse ingenuity he turns every argument the wrong way, and makes your plea for confidence another reason for mistrust. It is sad that he cannot see the iniquity of his groundless censure of others, especially of those who have been his best friends and the firmest upholders of the cause of Christ.

"I would not wrong
Virtue so tried by the least shade of doubt :
Undue suspicion is more abject baseness
Even than the guilt suspected."

No one ought to be made an offender for a word ; but, when suspicion rules, even silence becomes a crime. Brethren, shun this vice by renouncing the love of self. Judge it to be a small matter what men think or say of you, and care only for their treatment of your Lord. If you are naturally sensitive do not indulge the weakness, nor allow others to play upon it. Would it not be a great degradation of your office if you were to keep an army of spies in your pay to collect information as to all that your people said of you? And yet it amounts to this if you allow certain busybodies to bring you all the gossip of the place. Drive the creatures away. Abhor those mischief-making, tattling hand-maidens of strife. Those who will fetch will carry, and no doubt the gossips go from your house and report every observation which falls from your lips, with plenty of garnishing of their own. Remember that, as the receiver is as bad as the thief, so the hearer of scandal is a sharer in the guilt of it. If there were no listening ears there would be no talebearing tongues. While you are a buyer of ill wares the demand will create the supply, and the factories of falsehood will be working full time. No one wishes to become a creator of lies, and yet he who hears slanders with pleasure and believes them with readiness will hatch many a brood into active life.

Solomon says "a whisperer separateth chief friends." (Prov. xvi. 28.) Insinuations are thrown out, and jealousies aroused, till "mutual coolness ensues, and neither can understand why; each wonders what can possibly be the cause. Thus the firmest, the longest, the warmest, and most confiding attachments, the

sources of life's sweetest joys, are broken up perhaps for ever."* This is work worthy of the arch-fiend himself, but it could never be done if men lived out of the atmosphere of suspicion. As it is, the world is full of sorrow through this cause, a sorrow as sharp as it is superfluous. This is grievous indeed! Campbell eloquently remarks, "The ruins of old friendships are a more melancholy spectacle to me than those of desolated palaces. They exhibit the heart which was once lighted up with joy all damp and deserted, and haunted by those birds of ill omen that nestle in ruins." O suspicion, what desolations thou hast made in the earth!

Learn to disbelieve those who have no faith in their brethren. Suspect those who would lead you to suspect others. A resolute unbelief in all the scandalmongers will do much to repress their mischievous energies. Matthew Pool in his Cripplegate Lecture says, "Common fame hath lost its reputation long since, and I do not know anything which it hath done in our day to regain it; therefore it ought not to be credited. How few reports there are of any kind which, when they come to be examined, we do not find to be false! For my part, I reckon, if I believe one report in twenty, I make a very liberal allowance. Especially distrust reproaches and evil reports, because these spread fastest, as being grateful to most persons, who suppose their own reputation to be never so well grounded as when it is built upon the ruins of other men's." Because the persons who would render you mistrustful of your friends are a sorry set, and because suspicion is in itself a wretched and tormenting vice, resolve to turn towards the whole business your blind eye and your deaf ear.

Need I say a word or two about the wisdom of *never hearing what was not meant for you*. The eaves-dropper is a mean person, very little if anything better than the common informer; and he who says he *overheard* may be considered to have heard over and above what he should have done.

Jeremy Taylor wisely and justly observes, "Never listen at the door or window, for besides that it contains in it a danger and a snare, it is also invading my neighbour's privacy, and a laying that open, which he therefore encloses that it might not be open." It is a well worn proverb that listeners seldom hear any good of themselves. Listening is a sort of larceny, but the goods stolen are never a pleasure to the thief. Information obtained by clandestine means must, in all but extreme cases, be more injury

* Dr. Wardlaw on Proverbs.

than benefit to a cause. The magistrate may judge it expedient to obtain evidence by such means, but I cannot imagine a case in which a minister should do so. Ours is a mission of grace and peace; we are not prosecutors who search out condemnatory evidence, but friends whose love would cover a multitude of offences. The peeping eyes of Canaan, the son of Ham, shall never be in our employ; we prefer the pious delicacy of Shem and Japhet, who went backward and covered the shame which the child of evil had published with glee.

To opinions and remarks about yourself turn also as a general rule the blind eye and the deaf ear. Public men must expect public criticism, and as the public cannot be regarded as infallible, public men may expect to be criticized in a way which is neither fair nor pleasant. To all honest and just remarks we are bound to give due measure of heed, but to the bitter verdict of prejudice, the frivolous faultfinding of men of fashion, the stupid utterances of the ignorant, and the fierce denunciations of opponents, we may very safely turn a deaf ear. We cannot expect those to approve of us whom we condemn by our testimony against their favourite sins their commendation would show that we had missed our mark. We naturally look to be approved by our own people, the members of our churches, and the adherents of our congregations, and when they make observations which show that they are not very great admirers, we may be tempted to discouragement if not to anger: herein lies a snare. When I was about to leave my village charge for London, one of the old men prayed that I might be "delivered from the bleating of the sheep." For the life of me I could not imagine what he meant, but the riddle is plain now, and I have learned to offer the prayer myself. Too much consideration of what is said by our people, whether it be in praise or in depreciation, is not good for us. If we dwell on high with "that great Shepherd of the sheep" we shall care little for all the confused bleatings around us, but if we become "carnal, and walk as men," we shall have little rest if we listen to this, that, and the other which every poor sheep may bleat about us. Perhaps it is quite true that you were uncommonly dull last Sabbath morning, but there was no need that Mrs. Clack should come and tell you that Deacon Jones thought so. It is more than probable that having been out in the country all the previous week, your preaching was very like milk and water, but there can be no necessity for your going round among the people to discover whether they noticed it or not. Is it not enough that your conscience is uneasy

upon the point? Endeavour to improve for the future, but do not want to hear all that every Jack, Tom, and Mary may have to say about it. On the other hand, you were on the high horse in your last sermon, and finished with quite a flourish of trumpets, and you feel considerable anxiety to know what impression you produced. Repress your curiosity: it will do you no good to enquire. If the people should happen to agree with your verdict, it will only feed your pitiful vanity, and if they think otherwise your fishing for their praise will injure you in their esteem. In any case it is all about yourself, and this is a poor theme to be anxious about; play the man, and do not demean yourself by seeking compliments like little children when dressed in new clothes, who say, "See my pretty frock." Have you not by this time discovered that flattery is as injurious as it is pleasant? It softens the mind and makes you more sensitive to slander. In proportion as praise pleases you censure will pain you. Besides, it is a crime to be taken off from your great object of glorifying the Lord Jesus by petty considerations as to your little self, and, if there were no other reason, this ought to weigh much with you. Pride is a deadly sin, and will grow without your borrowing the parish water-cart to quicken it. Forget expressions which feed your vanity, and if you find yourself relishing the unwholesome morsels confess the sin with deep humiliation. Payson showed that he was strong in the Lord when he wrote to his mother, "You must not, certainly, my dear mother, say one word which even looks like an intimation that you think me advancing in grace. I cannot bear it. All the people here, whether friends or enemies, conspire to ruin me. Satan and my own heart, of course, will lend a hand; and if you join too, I fear all the cold water which Christ can throw upon my pride will not prevent its breaking out into a destructive flame. As certainly as anybody flatters and caresses me my heavenly Father has to whip me: and an unspeakable mercy it is that he condescends to do it. I can, it is true, easily muster a hundred reasons why I should not be proud, but pride will not mind reason, nor anything else but a good drubbing. Even at this moment I feel it tingling in my fingers' ends, and seeking to guide my pen." Knowing something myself of those secret whippings which our good Father administers to his servants when he sees them unduly exalted, I heartily add my own solemn warnings against your pampering the flesh by listening to the praises of the kindest friends you have. They are injudicious, and you must beware of them.

A sensible friend who will unsparingly criticize you from week to week will be a far greater blessing to you than a thousand indiscriminating admirers if you have sense enough to bear his treatment, and grace enough to be thankful for it. When I was preaching at the Surrey Gardens, an unknown censor of great ability used to send me a weekly list of my mispronunciations and other slips of speech. He never signed his name, and that was my only cause of complaint against him, for he left me in a debt which I could not acknowledge. I take this opportunity of confessing my obligations to him, for with genial temper, and an evident desire to benefit me, he marked down most relentlessly everything which he supposed me to have said incorrectly. Concerning some of these corrections he was in error himself, but for the most part he was right, and his remarks enabled me to perceive and avoid many mistakes. I looked for his weekly memoranda with much interest, and I trust I am all the better for them. If I had repeated a sentence two or three Sundays before, he would say, "See same expression in such a sermon," mentioning number and page. He remarked on one occasion that I too often quoted the line

"Nothing in my hands I bring,"

and, he added, "we are sufficiently informed of the vacuity of your hands." He demanded my authority for calling a man *corechus*; and so on. Possibly some young men might have been discouraged, if not irritated, by such severe criticisms, but they would have been very foolish, for in resenting such correction they would have been throwing away a valuable aid to progress. No money can purchase outspoken honest judgment, and when we can get it for nothing let us utilize it to the fullest extent. The worst of it is that of those who offer their judgments few are qualified to form them, and we shall be pestered with foolish, impertinent remarks, unless we turn to them all the blind eye and the deaf ear.

In the case of false reports against yourself, for the most part use the deaf ear. Unfortunately liars are not yet extinct, and, like Richard Baxter and John Bunyan, you may be accused of crimes which your soul abhors. Be not staggered thereby, for this trial has befallen the very best of men, and even your Lord did not escape the envenomed tongue of falsehood. In almost all cases it is the wisest course to let such things die a natural death. A great lie, if unnoticed, is like a big fish out of water, it dashes and plunges and beats itself to death in a short time. To answer it is to supply it

with its element, and help it to a longer life. Falsehoods usually carry their own refutation somewhere about them, and sting themselves to death. Some lies especially have a peculiar smell, which betrays their rottenness to every honest nose. If you are disturbed by them the object of their invention is partly answered, but your silent endurance disappoints malice and gives you a partial victory, which God in his care of you will soon turn into a complete deliverance. Your blameless life will be your best defence, and those who have seen it will not allow you to be condemned so readily as your slanderers expect. Only abstain from fighting your own battles, and in nine cases out of ten your accusers will gain nothing by their malevolence but chagrin for themselves and contempt from others. To prosecute the slanderer is very seldom wise. I remember a beloved servant of Christ who in his youth was very sensitive, and, being falsely accused, proceeded against the person at law. An apology was offered, it withdrew every iota of the charge, and was most ample, but the good man insisted upon its being printed in the newspapers, and the result convinced him of his own unwisdom. Multitudes, who would otherwise have never heard of the libel, asked what it meant, and made comments thereon, generally concluding with the sage remark that he must have done something imprudent to provoke such an accusation. He was heard to say that so long as he lived he would never resort to such a method again, for he felt that the public apology had done him more harm than the slander itself. Standing as we do in a position which makes us choice targets for the devil and his allies, our best course is to defend our innocence by our silence and leave our reputation with God. Yet there are exceptions to this general rule. When distinct, definite, public charges are made against a man he is bound to answer them, and answer them in the clearest and most open manner. To decline all investigation is in such a case practically to plead guilty, and whatever may be the mode of putting it, the general public ordinarily regard a refusal to reply as a proof of guilt. Under mere worry and annoyance it is by far the best to be altogether passive, but when the matter assumes more serious proportions, and our accuser defies us to a defence, we are bound to meet his charges with honest statements of fact. In every instance counsel should be sought of the Lord as to how to deal with slanderous tongues, and in the issue innocence will be vindicated and falsehood convicted.

Some ministers have been broken in spirit, driven from their

position, and even injured in character by taking notice of village scandal. I know a fine young man, for whom I predicted a career of usefulness, who fell into great trouble because he at first allowed it to be a trouble and then worked hard to make it so. He came to me and complained that he had a great grievance; and so it was a grievance, but from beginning to end it was all about what some half-dozen women had said about his procedure after the death of his wife. It was originally too small a thing to deal with,—a Mrs. Q. had said that she should not wonder if the minister married the servant then living in his house; another represented her as saying that he ought to marry her, and then a third, with a malicious ingenuity, found a deeper meaning in the words, and construed them into a charge. Worst of all, the dear sensitive preacher must needs trace the matter out and accuse a score or two of people of spreading libels against him, and even threaten some of them with legal proceedings. If he could have prayed over it in secret, or even have whistled over it, no harm would have come of the tittle-tattle; but this dear brother could not treat the slander wisely, for he had not what I earnestly recommend to you, namely, a blind eye and a deaf ear.

Once more, my brethren, the blind eye and the deaf ear will be useful to you *in relation to other churches and their pastors*. I am always delighted when a brother in meddling with other people's business burns his fingers. Why did he not attend to his own concerns and not episcopize in another's diocese? I am frequently requested by members of churches to meddle in their home disputes; but unless they come to me with authority, officially appointing me to be umpire, I decline. Alexander Cruden gave himself the name of "the Corrector," and I have never envied him the title. It would need a peculiar inspiration to enable a man to settle all the controversies of our churches, and as a rule those who are least qualified are the most eager to attempt it. For the most part interference, however well intentioned, is a failure. Internal dissensions in our churches are very like quarrels between man and wife: when the case comes to such a pass that they must fight it out, the interposing party will be the victim of their common fury. No one but Mr. Verdant Green will interfere in a domestic battle, for the man of course resents it, and the lady, though suffering from many a blow, will say, "You leave my husband alone; he has a right to beat me if he likes." However great the mutual animosity of conjugal combatants, it seems to be forgotten in resentment against intruders; and so, amongst the

very independent denomination of Baptists, the person outside the church who interferes in any manner is sure to get the worst of it. Do not consider yourself to be the bishop of all the neighbouring churches, but be satisfied with looking after Lystra, or Derbe, or Thessalonica, or whichever church may have been allotted to your care, and leave Philippi and Ephesus in the hands of their own pastors. Do not encourage disaffected persons in finding fault with their minister, or in bringing you news of evils in other congregations. When you meet your brother ministers do not be in a hurry to advise them; they know their duty quite as well as you know yours, and your judgment upon their course of action is probably founded upon partial information supplied from prejudiced sources. Do not grieve your neighbours by your meddlesomeness. We have all enough to do at home, and it is prudent to keep out of all disputes which do not belong to us. We are recommended by one of the world's proverbs to wash our dirty linen at home, and I will add another line to it, and advise that we do not call on our neighbours while their linen is in the suds. This is due to our friends, and will best promote peace. "He that passeth by and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears";—he is very apt to be bitten, and few will pity him. Bridges wisely observes that "Our blessed Master has read us a lesson of godly wisdom. He healed the contentions in his own family, but when called to meddle with strife belonging not to him, he gave answer—'Who made me a judge or a divider over you?'" Self-constituted judges win but little respect; if they were more fit to censure they would be less inclined to do so. Many a trifling difference within a church has been fanned into a great flame by ministers outside who had no idea of the mischief they were causing: they gave verdicts upon *ex parte* statements, and so egged on opposing persons who felt safe when they could say that the neighbouring ministers quite agreed with them. My counsel is that we join the "Knownnothings," and never say a word upon a matter till we have heard both sides; and, moreover, that we do our best to avoid hearing either one side or the other if the matter does not concern us.

Is not this a sufficient explanation of my declaration that I have one blind eye and one deaf ear, and that they are the best eye and ear I have?

LECTURE X.

On Conversion as our Aim.

THE grand object of the Christian ministry is the glory of God. Whether souls are converted or not, if Jesus Christ be faithfully preached, the minister has not laboured in vain, for he is a sweet savour unto God as well in them that perish as in them that are saved. Yet, as a rule, God has sent us to preach in order that through the gospel of Jesus Christ the sons of men may be reconciled to him. Here and there a preacher of righteousness, like Noah, may labour on and bring none beyond his own family circle into the ark of salvation; and another, like Jeremiah, may weep in vain over an impenitent nation; but, for the most part, the work of preaching is intended to save the hearers. It is ours to sow even in stony places, where no fruit rewards our toil; but still we are bound to look for a harvest, and mourn if it does not appear in due time.

The glory of God being our chief object, we aim at it by seeking the edification of saints and the salvation of sinners. It is a noble work to instruct the people of God, and to build them up in their most holy faith: we may by no means neglect this duty. To this end we must give clear statements of gospel doctrine, of vital experience, and of Christian duty, and never shrink from declaring the whole counsel of God. In too many cases sublime truths are held in abeyance under the pretence that they are not practical; whereas the very fact that they are revealed proves that the Lord thinks them to be of value, and woe unto us if we pretend to be wiser than he. We may say of any and every doctrine of Scripture—

“To give it then a tongue is wise in man.”

If any one note is dropped from the divine harmony of truth the music may be sadly marred. Your people may fall into grave

spiritual diseases through the lack of a certain form of spiritual nutriment, which can only be supplied by the doctrines which you withhold. In the food which we eat there are ingredients which do not at first appear to be necessary to life; but experience shows that they are requisite to health and strength. Phosphorus will not make flesh, but it is wanted for bone; many earths and salts come under the same description—they are necessary in due proportion to the human economy. Even thus certain truths which appear to be little adapted for spiritual nutriment are, nevertheless, very beneficial in furnishing believers with backbone and muscle, and in repairing the varied organs of Christian manhood. We must preach “the whole truth,” that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Our great object of glorifying God is, however, to be mainly achieved by the winning of souls. We *must* see souls born unto God. If we do not, our cry should be that of Rachel “Give me children, or I die.” If we do not win souls, we should mourn as the husbandman who sees no harvest, as the fisherman who returns to his cottage with an empty net, or as the huntsman who has in vain roamed over hill and dale. Ours should be Isaiah’s language uttered with many a sigh and groan—“Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” The ambassadors of peace should not cease to weep bitterly until sinners weep for their sins.

If we intensely desire to see our hearers believe on the Lord Jesus, how shall we act in order to be used of God for producing such a result? This is the theme of the present lecture.

Since conversion is a divine work, we must take care that we *depend entirely upon the Spirit of God*, and look to him for power over men’s minds. Often as this remark is repeated, I fear we too little feel its force; for if we were more truly sensible of our need of the Spirit of God, should we not study more in dependence upon his teaching? Should we not pray more importunately to be anointed with his sacred unction? Should we not in preaching give more scope for his operation? Do we not fail in many of our efforts, because we practically, though not doctrinally, ignore the Holy Ghost? His place as God is on the throne, and in all our enterprises he must be first, midst, and end: we are instruments in his hand, and nothing more.

This being fully admitted, what else should be done if we hope to see conversions? *Assuredly we should be careful to preach most prominently those truths which are likely to lead to this end.*

What truths are those? I answer, we should first and foremost preach *Christ, and him crucified*. Where Jesus is exalted souls are attracted;—"I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." The preaching of the cross is to them that are saved the wisdom of God and the power of God. The Christian minister should preach all the truths which cluster around the person and work of the Lord Jesus, and hence he must declare very earnestly and pointedly *the evil of sin*, which created the need of a Saviour. Let him show that sin is a breach of the law, that it necessitates punishment, and that the wrath of God is revealed against it. Let him never treat sin as though it were a trifle, or a misfortune, but let him set it forth as exceeding sinful. Let him go into particulars, not superficially glancing at evil in the gross, but mentioning various sins in detail, especially those most current at the time: such as that all-devouring hydra of drunkenness, which devastates our land; lying, which in the form of slander abounds on all sides; and licentiousness, which must be mentioned with holy delicacy, and yet needs to be denounced unsparingly. We must especially reprove those evils into which our hearers have fallen, or are likely to fall. Explain the ten commandments and obey the divine injunction: "show my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins." Open up the spirituality of the law as our Lord did, and show how it is broken by evil thoughts, intents, and imaginations. By this means many sinners will be pricked in their hearts. Old Robbie Flockhart used to say, "It is of no use trying to sew with the silken thread of the gospel unless we pierce a way for it with the sharp needle of the law." The law goes first, like the needle, and draws the gospel thread after it: therefore preach concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment to come. Let such language as that of the fifty-first Psalm be often explained: show that God requireth truth in the inward parts, and that purging with sacrificial blood is absolutely needful. Aim at the heart. Probe the wound and touch the very quick of the soul. Spare not the sterner themes, for men must be wounded before they can be healed, and slain before they can be made alive. No man will ever put on the robe of Christ's righteousness till he is stripped of his fig leaves, nor will he wash in the fount of mercy till he perceives his filthiness. Therefore, my brethren, we must not cease to declare the law, its demands, its threatenings, and the sinner's multiplied breaches of it.

Teach the depravity of human nature. Show men that sin is not an

accident, but the genuine outcome of their corrupt hearts. Preach the doctrine of the natural depravity of man. It is an unfashionable truth; for nowadays ministers are to be found who are very fine upon "the dignity of human nature." The "lapsed state of man"—that is the phrase—is sometimes alluded to, but the corruption of our nature, and kindred themes are carefully avoided: Ethiopians are informed that they may whiten their skins, and it is hoped that leopards will remove their spots. Brethren, you will not fall into this delusion, or, if you do, you may expect few conversions. To prophecy smooth things, and to extenuate the evil of our lost estate, is not the way to lead men to Jesus.

Brethren, *the necessity for the Holy Ghost's divine operations* will follow as a matter of course upon the former teaching, for dire necessity demands divine interposition. Men must be told that they are dead, and that only the Holy Spirit can quicken them; that the Spirit works according to his own good pleasure, and that no man can claim his visitations or deserve his aid. This is thought to be very discouraging teaching, and so it is, but men need to be discouraged when they are seeking salvation in a wrong manner. To put them out of conceit of their own abilities is a great help toward bringing them to look out of self to another, even the Lord Jesus. The doctrine of election and other great truths which declare salvation to be all of grace, and to be, not the right of the creature, but the gift of the Sovereign Lord, are all calculated to hide pride from man, and so to prepare him to receive the mercy of God.

We must also set before our hearers the justice of God and *the certainty that every transgression will be punished*. Often must we

"Before them place in dread array,
The pomp of that tremendous day
When Christ with clouds shall come."

Sound in their ears the doctrine of the second advent, not as a curiosity of prophecy, but as a solemn practical fact. It is idle to set forth our Lord in all the tinkling bravery of an earthly kingdom, after the manner of brethren who believe in a revived Judaism; we need to preach the Lord as coming to judge the world in righteousness, to summon the nations to his bar, and to separate them as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. Paul preached of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, and made Felix tremble: these themes are equally powerful now. We rob the gospel of its power if we leave out its threatenings of

punishment. It is to be feared that the novel opinions upon annihilation and restoration which have afflicted the Church in these last days have caused many ministers to be slow to speak concerning the last judgment and its issues, and consequently the terrors of the Lord have had small influence upon either preachers or hearers. If this be so it cannot be too much regretted, for one great means of conversion is thus left unused.

Beloved brethren, we must be most of all clear upon the great soul-saving doctrine of *the atonement*; we must preach a real *bonâ fide* substitutionary sacrifice, and proclaim pardon as its result. Cloudy views as to atoning blood are mischievous to the last degree; souls are held in unnecessary bondage, and saints are robbed of the calm confidence of faith, because they are not definitely told that "God hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." We must preach substitution straightforwardly and unmistakeably, for if any doctrine be plainly taught in Scripture it is this,—“The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed.” “He, His own self, bare our sins in His own body on the tree.” This truth gives rest to the conscience by showing how God can be just, and the justifier of him that believeth. This is the great net of gospel fishermen: the fish are drawn or driven in the right direction by other truths, but this is the net itself.

If men are to be saved, we must in plainest terms preach *justification by faith*, as the method by which the atonement becomes effectual in the soul's experience. If we are saved by the substitutionary work of Christ, no merit of ours is wanted, and all men have to do is by a simple faith to accept what Christ has already done. It is delightful to dwell on the grand truth that “This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.” O glorious sight—the Christ sitting down in the place of honour because his work is done. Well may the soul rest in a work so evidently complete.

Justification by faith must never be obscured, and yet all are not clear upon it. I once heard a sermon upon “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy,” of which the English was, “Be good, very good, and though you will have to suffer in consequence, God will reward you in the end.” The preacher, no doubt, believed in justification by faith, but he very distinctly preached the opposite doctrine. Many do this when addressing children, and I notice that they generally speak to the little ones about *loving* Jesus, and not upon believing in him. This must leave a

mischievous impression upon youthful minds and take them off from the true way of peace.

Preach earnestly *the love of God in Christ Jesus*, and magnify the abounding mercy of the Lord; but always preach it in connection with his justice. Do not extol the single attribute of love in the method too generally followed, but regard love in the high theological sense, in which, like a golden circle, it holds within itself all the divine attributes: for God were not love if he were not just, and did not hate every unholy thing. Never exalt one attribute at the expense of another. Let boundless mercy be seen in calm consistency with stern justice and unlimited sovereignty. The true character of God is fitted to awe, impress, and humble the sinner: be careful not to misrepresent your Lord.

All these truths and others which complete the evangelical system are calculated to lead men to faith; therefore make them the staple of your teaching.

Secondly, if we are intensely anxious to have souls saved we must not only preach the truths which are likely to lead up to this end, but we must *use modes of handling those truths which are likely to conduce thereto*. Do you enquire, what are they? First, you must do a great deal by way of *instruction*. Sinners are not saved *in* darkness but *from* it; "that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good." Men must be taught concerning themselves, their sin, and their fall; their Saviour, redemption, regeneration, and so on. Many awakened souls would gladly accept God's way of salvation if they did but know it; they are akin to those of whom the apostle said, "And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it." If you will instruct them God will save them: is it not written, "the entrance of thy word giveth light"? If the Holy Spirit blesses your teaching, they will see how wrong they have been, and they will be led to repentance and faith. I do not believe in that preaching which lies mainly in shouting, "Believe! believe! believe!" In common justice you are bound to tell the poor people what they are to believe. There must be instruction, otherwise the exhortation to believe is manifestly ridiculous, and must in practice be abortive. I fear that some of our orthodox brethren have been prejudiced against the free invitations of the gospel by hearing the raw, undigested harangues of revivalist speakers whose heads are loosely put together. The best way to preach sinners to Christ is to preach Christ to sinners. Exhortations, entreaties, and beseechings, if not accompanied with sound instruction, are like firing off powder without shot. You may

shout, and weep, and plead, but you cannot lead men to believe what they have not heard, nor to receive a truth which has never been set before them. "Because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge."

While giving instruction it is wise to *appeal to the understanding*. True religion is as logical as if it were not emotional. I am not an admirer of the peculiar views of Mr. Finney, but I have no doubt that he was useful to many; and his power lay in his use of clear arguments. Many who knew his fame were greatly disappointed at first hearing him, because he used few beauties of speech and was as calm and dry as a book of Euclid; but he was exactly adapted to a certain order of minds, and they were convinced and convicted by his forcible reasoning. Should not persons of an argumentative cast of mind be provided for? We are to be all things to all men, and to these men we must become argumentative and push them into a corner with plain deductions and necessary inferences. Of carnal reasoning we would have none, but of fair, honest pondering, considering, judging, and arguing the more the better.

The class requiring logical argument is small compared with the number of those who need to be pleaded with, by way of *emotional persuasion*. They require not so much reasoning as heart-argument—which is logic set on fire. You must argue with them as a mother pleads with her boy that he will not grieve her, or as a fond sister entreats a brother to return to their father's home and seek reconciliation: argument must be quickened into persuasion by the living warmth of love. Cold logic has its force, but when made red hot with affection the power of tender argument is inconceivable. The power which one mind can gain over others is enormous, but it is often best developed when the leading mind has ceased to have power over itself. When passionate zeal has carried the man himself away his speech becomes an irresistible torrent, sweeping all before it. A man known to be godly and devout, and felt to be large-hearted and self-sacrificing, has a power in his very person, and his advice and recommendation carry weight because of his character; but when he comes to plead and to persuade, even to tears, his influence is wonderful, and God the Holy Spirit yokes it into his service. Brethren, we must *plead*. Entreaties and beseechings must blend with our instructions. Any and every appeal which will reach the conscience and move men to fly to Jesus we must perpetually employ, if by any means we may save some. I have sometimes heard ministers blamed for speaking of themselves

when they are pleading, but the censure need not be much regarded while we have such a precedent as the example of Paul. To a congregation who love you it is quite allowable to mention your grief that many of them are unsaved, and your vehement desire, and incessant prayer for their conversion. You are doing right when you mention your own experience of the goodness of God in Christ Jesus, and plead with men to come and taste the same. We must not be abstractions or mere officials to our people, but we must plead with them as real flesh and blood, if we would see them converted. When you can quote yourself as a living instance of what grace has done, the plea is too powerful to be withheld through fear of being charged with egotism.

Sometimes, too, we must change our tone. Instead of instructing, reasoning, and persuading, we must come to *threatening*, and declare the wrath of God upon impenitent souls. We must lift the curtain and let them see the future. Show them their danger, and warn them to escape from the wrath to come. This done, we must return to *invitation*, and set before the awakened mind the rich provisions of infinite grace which are freely presented to the sons of men. In our Master's name we must give the invitation, crying, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Do not be deterred from this, my brethren, by those ultra-Calvinistic theologians who say, "You may instruct and warn the ungodly, but you must not invite or entreat them." And why not? "Because they are dead sinners, and it is therefore absurd to invite them, since they cannot come." Wherefore then may we warn or instruct them? The argument is so strong, if it be strong at all, that it sweeps away all modes of appeal to sinners, and they alone are logical who, after they have preached to the saints, sit down and say, "The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." On what ground are we to address the ungodly at all? If we are only to bid them do such things as they are capable of doing without the Spirit of God, we are reduced to mere moralists. If it be absurd to bid the dead sinner believe and live, it is equally vain to bid him consider his state, and reflect upon his future doom. Indeed, it would be idle altogether were it not that true preaching is an act of faith, and is owned by the Holy Spirit as the means of working spiritual miracles. If we were by ourselves, and did not expect divine interpositions, we should be wise to keep within the bounds of reason, and persuade men to do only what we see in them the ability to do. We should then bid

the living live, urge the seeing to see, and persuade the willing to will. The task would be so easy that it might even seem to be superfluous; certainly no special call of the Holy Ghost would be needed for so very simple an undertaking. But, brethren, where is the mighty power and the victory of faith if our ministry is this and nothing more? Who among the sons of men would think it a great vocation to be sent into a synagogue to say to a perfectly vigorous man, "Rise up and walk," or to the possessor of sound limbs, "Stretch out thine hand." He is a poor Ezekiel whose greatest achievement is to cry, "Ye living souls, live."

Let the two methods be set side by side as to practical result, and it will be seen that those who never exhort sinners are seldom winners of souls to any great extent, but they maintain their churches by converts from other systems. I have even heard them say, "Oh, yes, the Methodists and Revivalists are beating the hedges, but we shall catch many of the birds." If I harboured such a mean thought I should be ashamed to express it. A system which cannot touch the outside world, but must leave arousing and converting work to others, whom it judges to be unsound, writes its own condemnation.

Again, brethren, if we wish to see souls saved, we must be wise as to *the times* when we address the unconverted. Very little common sense is spent over this matter. Under certain ministries there is a set time for speaking to sinners, and this comes as regularly as the hour of noon. A few crumbs of the feast are thrown to the dogs under the table at the close of the discourse, and they treat your crumbs as you treat them, namely, with courteous indifference. Why should the warning word be always at the hinder end of the discourse when hearers are most likely to be weary? Why give men notice to buckle on their harness so as to be prepared to repel our attack? When their interest is excited, and they are least upon the defensive, then let fly a shaft at the careless, and it will frequently be more effectual than a whole flight of arrows shot against them at a time when they are thoroughly encased in armour of proof. Surprise is a great element in gaining attention and fixing a remark upon the memory, and times for addressing the careless should be chosen with an eye to that fact. It may be very well as a rule to seek the edification of the saints in the morning discourse, but it would be wise to vary it, and let the unconverted sometimes have the chief labour of your preparation and the best service of the day.

Do not close a single sermon without addressing the ungodly, but at the same time set yourself seasons for a determined and continuous assault upon them, and proceed with all your soul to the conflict. On such occasions aim distinctly at immediate conversions; labour to remove prejudices, to resolve doubts, to conquer objections, and to drive the sinner out of his hiding-places at once. Summon the church-members to special prayer, beseech them to speak personally both with the concerned and the unconcerned, and be yourself doubly upon the watch to address individuals. We have found that our February meetings at the Tabernacle have yielded remarkable results: the whole month being dedicated to special effort. Winter is usually the preacher's harvest, because the people can come together better in the long evenings, and are debarred from out-of-door exercises and amusements. Be well prepared for the appropriate season when "kings go forth to battle."

Among the important elements in the promotion of conversion are your own tone, temper, and spirit in preaching. If you preach the truth in a dull, monotonous style, God *may* bless it, but in all probability he will not; at any rate the tendency of such a style is not to promote attention, but to hinder it. It is not often that sinners are awakened by ministers who are themselves asleep. A hard, unfeeling mode of speech is also to be avoided; want of tenderness is a sad lack, and repels rather than attracts. The spirit of Elijah may startle, and where it is exceedingly intense it may go far to prepare for the reception of the gospel; but for actual conversion more of John is needed,—love is the winning force. We must love men to Jesus. Great hearts are the main qualifications for great preachers, and we must cultivate our affections to that end. At the same time our manner must not degenerate into the soft and saccharine cant which some men affect who are for ever *dearing* everybody, and fawning upon people as if they hoped to soft-sawder them into godliness. Manly persons are disgusted, and suspect hypocrisy when they hear a preacher talking molasses. Let us be bold and outspoken, and never address our hearers as if we were asking a favour of them, or as if they would oblige the Redeemer by allowing him to save them. We are bound to be lowly, but our office as ambassadors should prevent our being servile.

Happy shall we be if we preach believingly, always expecting the Lord to bless his own word. This will give us a quiet confidence which will forbid petulance, rashness, and weariness. If we

ourselves doubt the power of the gospel, how can we preach it with authority? Feel that you are a favoured man in being allowed to proclaim the good news, and rejoice that your mission is fraught with eternal benefit to those before you. Let the people see how glad and confident the gospel has made you, and it will go far to make them long to partake in its blessed influences.

Preach very solemnly, for it is a weighty business, but let your matter be lively and pleasing, for this will prevent solemnity from souring into dreariness. Be so thoroughly solemn that all your faculties are aroused and consecrated, and then a dash of humour will only add intenser gravity to the discourse, even as a flash of lightning makes midnight darkness all the more impressive. Preach to one point, concentrating all your energies upon the object aimed at. There must be no riding of hobbies, no introduction of elegancies of speech, no suspicion of personal display, or you will fail. Sinners are quick-witted people, and soon detect even the smallest effort to glorify self. Forego everything for the sake of those you long to save. Be a fool for Christ's sake if this will win them, or be a scholar, if that will be more likely to impress them. Spare neither labour in the study, prayer in the closet, nor zeal in the pulpit. If men do not judge their souls to be worth a thought, compel them to see that their minister is of a very different opinion.

Mean conversions, expect them, and prepare for them. Resolve that your hearers shall either yield to your Lord or be without excuse, and that this shall be the immediate result of the sermon now in hand. Do not let the Christians around you wonder when souls are saved, but urge them to believe in the undiminished power of the glad tidings, and teach them to marvel if no saving result follows the delivery of the testimony of Jesus. Do not permit sinners to hear sermons as a matter of course, or allow them to play with the edged tools of Scripture as if they were mere toys; but again and again remind them that every true gospel sermon leaves them worse if it does not make them better. Their unbelief is a daily, hourly sin; never let them infer from your teaching that they are to be pitied for continuing to make God a liar by rejecting his Son.

Impressed with a sense of their danger, give the ungodly no rest in their sins; knock again and again at the door of their hearts, and knock as for life and death. Your solicitude, your earnestness, your anxiety, your travailing in birth for them God will bless to their arousing. God works mightily by this instrumentality.

But our agony for souls must be real and not feigned, and therefore our hearts must be wrought into true sympathy with God. Low piety means little spiritual power. Extremely pointed addresses may be delivered by men whose hearts are out of order with the Lord, but their result must be small. There is a something in the very tone of the man who has been with Jesus which has more power to touch the heart than the most perfect oratory: remember this and maintain an unbroken walk with God. You will need much night-work in secret if you are to gather many of your Lord's lost sheep. Only by prayer and fasting can you gain power to cast out the worst of devils. Let men say what they will about sovereignty, God connects special success with special states of heart, and if these are lacking he will not do many mighty works.

In addition to earnest preaching it will be wise to use other means. If you wish to see results from your sermons you must be accessible to enquirers. A meeting after every service may not be desirable, but frequent opportunities for coming into direct contact with your people should be sought after, and by some means created. It is shocking to think that there are ministers who have no method whatever for meeting the anxious, and if they do see here and there one, it is because of the courage of the seeker, and not because of the earnestness of the pastor. From the very first you should appoint frequent and regular seasons for seeing all who are seeking after Christ, and you should continually invite such to come and speak with you. In addition to this, hold numerous enquirers' meetings, at which the addresses shall be all intended to assist the troubled and guide the perplexed, and with these intermingle fervent prayers for the individuals present, and short testimonies from recent converts and others. As an open confession of Christ is continually mentioned in connection with saving faith, it is your wisdom to make it easy for believers who are as yet following Jesus by night to come forward and avow their allegiance to him. There must be no persuading to make a profession, but there should be every opportunity for so doing, and no stumbling-block placed in the way of hopeful minds. As for those who are not so far advanced as to warrant any thought of baptism, you may be of the utmost benefit to them by personal intercourse, and therefore you should seek it. Doubts may be cleared away, errors rectified, and terrors dispelled by a few moments' conversation; I have known instances in which a life-long misery has been ended by a simple explanation which

might have been given years before. Seek out the wandering sheep one by one, and when you find all your thoughts needed for a single individual, do not grudge your labour, for your Lord in his parable represents the good shepherd as bringing home his lost sheep, not in a flock, but one at a time upon his shoulders, and rejoicing so to do.

With all that you can do your desires will not be fulfilled, for soul-winning is a pursuit which grows upon a man; the more he is rewarded with conversions the more eager he becomes to see greater numbers born unto God. Hence you will soon discover that *you need help if many are to be brought in*. The net soon becomes too heavy for one pair of hands to drag to shore when it is filled with fishes; and your fellow-helpers must be beckoned to your assistance. Great things are done by the Holy Spirit when a whole church is aroused to sacred energy: then there are hundreds of testimonies instead of one, and these strengthen each other; then advocates for Christ succeed each other and work into each other's hands, while supplication ascends to heaven with the force of united importunity; thus sinners are encompassed with a cordon of earnest entreaties, and heaven itself is called into the field. It would seem hard in some congregations for a sinner to be saved, for whatever good he may receive from the pulpit is frozen out of him by the arctic atmosphere with which he is surrounded: and on the other hand some churches make it hard for men to remain unconverted, for with holy zeal they persecute the careless into anxiety. It should be our ambition, in the power of the Holy Ghost, to work the entire church into a fine missionary condition, to make it like a Leyden jar charged to the full with divine electricity, so that whatever comes into contact with it shall feel its power. What can one man do alone? What can he not do with an army of enthusiasts around him? Contemplate at the outset the possibility of having a church of soul-winners. Do not succumb to the usual idea that we can only gather a few useful workers, and that the rest of the community must inevitably be a dead weight: it may possibly so happen, but do not set out with that notion or it will be verified. The usual need not be the universal; better things are possible than anything yet attained; set your aim high and spare no effort to reach it. Labour to gather a church alive for Jesus, every member energetic to the full, and the whole in incessant activity for the salvation of men. To this end there must be the best of preaching to feed the host into strength, continual prayer to

bring down the power from on high, and the most heroic example on your own part to fire their zeal: then under the divine blessing a common-sense management of the entire force cannot fail to produce the most desirable issues. Who among you can grasp this idea and embody it in actual fact?

To call in another brother every now and then to take the lead in evangelistic services will be found very wise and useful; for there are some fish that never will be taken in your net, but will surely fall to the lot of another fisherman. Fresh voices penetrate where the accustomed sound has lost effect, and they tend also to beget a deeper interest in those already attentive. Sound and prudent evangelists may lend help even to the most efficient pastor, and gather in fruit which he has failed to reach; at any rate it makes a break in the continuity of ordinary services, and renders them less likely to become monotonous. Never suffer jealousy to hinder you in this. Suppose another lamp should outshine yours, what will it matter so long as it brings light to those whose welfare you are seeking? Say with Moses, "Would God all the Lord's servants were prophets." He who is free from selfish jealousy will find that no occasion will suggest it; his people may be well aware that their pastor is excelled by others in talent, but they will be ready to assert that he is surpassed by none in love to their souls. It is not needful for a loving son to believe that his father is the most learned man in the parish; he loves him for his own sake, and not because he is superior to others. Call in every now and then a warm-hearted neighbour, utilize the talent in the church itself, and procure the services of some eminent soul-winner, and this may, in God's hands, break up the hard soil for you, and bring you brighter days.

In fine, beloved brethren, by any means, by all means, labour to glorify God by conversions, and rest not till your heart's desire is fulfilled.

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